

talk
to
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

Footprints without Feet

8

The Hack Driver

1. Summary

This is a funny but sad story about a confidence trickster. The narrator was a junior assistant clerk in a famous law firm. He was sent on a mission to New Mullion, a town in the countryside, forty miles away. He was asked to serve summons on a man called Oliver Lutkins, who was needed as a witness in a law case. Lutkins had ignored all the letters sent to him by the firm.

When the train reached the station, the lawyer saw a delivery man. He was about forty years old, and looked very cheerful. The narrator told him that he wanted to find a man named Oliver Lutkins quickly, so that he could return to the city that very afternoon.

The delivery man was a hack driver and introduced himself as Bill Magnuson. He was extremely helpful, and immediately offered to take the lawyer to all the places frequented by Lutkins. Bill told the lawyer that he would charge two dollars for every hour that he spent with him. The lawyer readily agreed.

Bill then led the lawyer through the entire village, looking for Lutkins – to Fritz's, Gustaff's and Gray's barber shops, poolrooms and even Oliver's mother's farm. He would not let the lawyer speak to any of the villagers directly; instead, everywhere he stopped, he asked the people if they had seen Lutkins. Each time the answer was almost the same, yes, Lutkins had been there, but had just left. As time went on, the lawyer became very friendly with Bill, and was very impressed by his helpfulness.

Bill and the lawyer spent six hours looking for Lutkins, but they could not find him. Finally, it was time for the afternoon train, so Bill dropped the lawyer off at the station. On his way back to the city, the lawyer thought about how charming Bill was, and about the simplicity and honesty of life in the village. He was very unhappy with his life in the city, and thought seriously about

returning to New Mullion to practice law. He thought he had discovered a new way of life!

When he returned to the office, the Chief of the firm almost murdered him! He was really angry that the lawyer had not been able to serve the summons on Lutkins. He was sent right back to New Mullion with a colleague who had worked with Lutkins.

When they reached New Mullion, Bill was again standing at the station. His mother was with him. The colleague immediately recognized him. It was Lutkins! Lutkins, helped by the entire village, had made a complete fool of the lawyer by pretending to be Bill. When the lawyer finally served the summons, Lutkins and his mother laughed at him as though he was a bright boy of seven!

2. How to Avoid Confidence Tricksters

Nobody wants to be cheated. Once you're a victim, your self-esteem plummets. Confidence tricksters leave you with trust issues and empty your bank account.

1. How to spot a confidence trickster

It helps to know how to spot them and recognize ways you are vulnerable. Whether you're a kind-hearted elderly person, or a successful businessman, you're in danger of being taken in by a fraudster.

(i) Everyone is the potential victim of a con

Cons don't only pick victims who seem vulnerable. They know everyone has weak points.

Tricksters want your money. Or they may see you as a stepping-stone to build a reputation that fools others. Here's how they operate - all create a false personality and capture trust.

(ii) How do they do it?

Cons are masters of detail and even note people's body language when figuring out their emotional needs.

Fraudsters want to know your weak spots so they can gain entry to your mind and heart. They search for your weaknesses. You love animals and want to help endangered species? You hate

politicians who don't live up to their image? Anything you have a strong opinion about might be exploited by a con artist.

(iii) Cons create trust

Of course, you still aren't ready to part with money. You must believe the salesman has your best interests at heart.

Confidence tricksters, must earn your trust. To do that, they must build a relationship with you. They have to be likable and friendly or you won't be interested in their ideas.

(iv) Reputation

Cons gain trust in several ways. One might be to ensure you think they are honest, good citizens.

Their image is a false illusion you might not see through when you don't know them well. To meet their aim they create a terrific reputation fast. Hence, they may be the most charming, polite, and seemingly kind individuals you think you'll ever meet.

Your friends and neighbours will speak well of them when they are new in town.

"What a fine person," they will say. "He's so polite. He carried my bags the other day."

Or, *"she's lovely. She asked about my sick son who's in hospital and wished me well."*

(v) Cons are super-likable

What's more, they pretend to be like you. Studies show we think well of people who share our views and have similar traits to us.

A con artist will act as though they like what you like and hold the same opinions. You enjoy cycling? Guess what? So does your fraud pal. Further, he/she loves the same sports, food, and music as you.

(vi) Cons put their foot in the door

You've heard of the foot in the door strategy no doubt.

Cons may gain entry to your mind by asking something huge from you. You're not stupid, though, so you'll say no. They understand

you won't oblige, however. Their next step is to ask something much smaller. Just a little favour compared to their first request. *"I know you can't give me the entire amount of flight money to visit my sick son who lives the other side of the world. But, maybe you could contribute a sum to help?"*

(vii) Cons make you feel special

Another great trick used by cons is to feed your ego. We all go a little weak at the knees when people think we are special.

Everyone wants someone to tell them they are important. Cons know this and feed your need for acceptance.

"No one makes cakes/looks/smiles/is as kind as you." When you hear such praise, your heart melts and your wallet and heart crack open a little. Still, though. You're smart and won't be taken in completely so easily. Before that happens, you must also think a con is successful.

(viii) Fraudsters ooze success

What does society hold in high-esteem? Love? Compassion? You would hope so. However. Often it's success. If someone appears successful, they have instant respect.

If someone tells you they overcame problems to become a high-flier, you are impressed. Anyone who fights to get through terrible times and make a success of their lives, well, we think they are inspiring and special. When their luck fails, we feel sorry for them and want to help.

"You built your dream business, after rising from the gutter, and lost it due to illness. Now you need money to pay your medical bills? Of course I'll help!"

(ix) People don't like to change their beliefs

Science shows nobody enjoys change with their beliefs. They hang onto them so fast they can be unwilling to let them go, even when reality screams they are wrong.

Plus, if you invest emotional energy or money in a relationship you don't want to be seen as foolish. Studies tell us we would rather bend the truth, to the point we fool ourselves rather than admit we've made a mistake.

2. How to avoid being taken in by a confidence trickster

Some of the things you can do so that you are not taken in by a confidence trickster are –

(i) Do background checks

If someone seems to be too good to be true then check their background.

Do they really have the qualifications and experience they mention? Do they come from the area they used to live? Do they have plenty of friends? Good guys have old pals, not just new ones.

(ii) Study their details and body language

Are the specifics of their stories consistent? Liars forget data and change it over time.

What about their body language?

Do they cover their mouth or tap their nose when they talk? Do they fail to give you eye contact? Stare when they speak?

(iii) Listen to your intuition

What does your gut say?

Is their doubt in your heart? A sense of unease in your bones? That's your intuition speaking.

(iv) Use your common sense

If someone you don't know well asks for money, hold back and find out more information before parting with cash.

Even if the individual has sent you many emails or letters, you don't really know them. They might contact lots of people with similar pleas for funds.

Never disclose financial information like your bank details to anyone. Even if they tell you they are an official.

You need evidence they are genuine before you can believe them. Also, stay on top of local scams by checking data online.

Altruism and compassion are essential if we are to live in a kind and giving world. Be wise with your heart and cash though.

Don't let a con artist fool you. Save your benevolence for worthy people.

3. Vocabulary

1. **Serve summons** – an official demand to appear in court on a particular date
My job at my law firm, is to **serve summons** and write legal documents.
2. **Hack driver** – the driver of a horse drawn vehicle
The **hack driver** was waiting just outside the station looking for customers.
3. **Graduating with honours** – getting a college degree with honours i.e. very high marks
Since I am **graduating with honours**, it will be easier to get admission into a Master's degree course.
4. **Assistant** – a person who helps someone else to do a job
The **assistant** manager of the hotel took us to our rooms.
5. **Clerk** – a person who works in an office, dealing with records or performing general office duties
You have to submit your application to the **clerk** behind the counter.
6. **Magnificent** – extremely beautiful, impressive, splendid, grand
The wedding celebrations were **magnificent** and continued for three days.
7. **Legal briefs** – a written legal document that is presented in court in a particular case
The junior lawyer was asked to draft the **legal brief** in the theft case.
8. **Private detective** – a person whose job is discovering information about people; he/ she is not a government employee or a police officer
He hired a **private detective** to find out more about the man his daughter wanted to marry.

9. **Shadowy** – dark, shaded, gloomy, vague
He was hiding in a **shadowy** corner of the hall.
10. **Victim** – a person harmed or killed as a result of crime, a person who is tricked, or damaged by someone's actions or his own
The police assured the **victims** that the crime would be fully investigated.
11. **Self-confident** – behaving calmly because you have no doubts about your ability or knowledge
The **self-confident** young man stood up immediately and answered the lecturer's question.
12. **Unpleasant** – not enjoyable or pleasant
The **unpleasant** truth is that he did not study for his exam at all.
13. **Revealed** – made known or showed something that is surprising, or that was previously secret
His biography **revealed** all the family secrets.
14. **Fleeing** – escaping by running away, especially because of danger or fear
The refugees were **fleeing** from the war-torn area.
15. **Rejoiced** – felt or showed great happiness about something
Everyone **rejoiced** at the news of the safe return of the kidnapped child.
16. **Witness** – a person who sees an event happening, especially a crime or an accident; here, a person in a law court who promises to tell the truth, and answers questions about something he/she has seen or knows
She appeared as a **witness** in the case involving the drunk driver.
17. **Ignored** – intentionally not listened, or gave attention to
I smiled at Tina's father, but he **ignored** me.
18. **Expectations** – strong beliefs and hopes that something will happen or you will get something that you want
I was determined to live up to the **expectations** of my boss.
19. **Severely** – to a great degree, harshly, strictly
She was **severely** punished for damaging the statue of the founder of the college.

20. **Disappointed** – let down, sad or displeased, disheartened because something has not happened or is not as good as you had hoped
The employees were **disappointed** as they had expected a larger bonus.
21. **Sour** – having a sharp, sometimes unpleasant taste or smell, like a lemon; not sweet; here, used to describe an unpleasant colour
These grapes are very **sour**.
22. **Bare** – empty, simple, plain, naked
The room was **bare** of any furniture except a cot in one corner.
The doctor asked Rakesh to **bare** his chest, so that he could examine the wound.
23. **Agreeable** – quite enjoyable and pleasurable, pleasant, pleasing
We spent an **agreeable** evening with our friends.
24. **Thick about the middle** – fat around the waist
Gita's grandfather was a jolly old man, a bit **thick about the middle**.
25. **Well-worn** – shabby, showing signs of extensive use, old
His clothes may be **well-worn**, but they are always clean.
26. **Probably** – used to mean that something is very likely
I will **probably** visit my aunt on my way back from work.
27. **Poker** – a card game when players bluff about the value of their cards
We play **poker** in the club every weekend.

28. **Hack** – here a horse drawn vehicle; to cut into pieces in a rough and violent way

Hack is a short form of the word hackney, a type of carriage drawn by horses.

They tried to **hack** their way through the thick forest.



A Hackney Carriage

29. **Hangs out** – to spend a lot of time in a place or with someone
My brother's group of friends **hangs out** at the coffee shop every Saturday.
30. **Warmth** – affection, kindness, state or sensation of being warm
His **warmth** made me feel welcome to their house.
31. **Affection** – a feeling of liking for a person or place
He had a deep **affection** for his grandmother.
32. **Bargain** – to try to make someone agree to give you something that is better for you, such as a better price or better working conditions
You can usually **bargain** with the handicraft dealers and bring down the price a little.
33. **Carriage** – a vehicle with four wheels that is usually pulled by horses and was used mainly in the past
The President of India used to arrive at the Republic Day parade in a horse-drawn **carriage**.
34. **Interfere** – to involve yourself in a situation where your involvement is not wanted or is not helpful
I am not going to **interfere** in how she brings up her daughter.

35. **Fancy clothes** – expensive clothes
She went to shop in the mall wearing **fancy clothes**.
36. **Suspicious** – making you feel that something illegal is happening, or that something is wrong
The shopkeeper kept a close eye on Ravi as his behaviour was very **suspicious**.
37. **Took him into my confidence** – share your secret with him, trusting him not to tell other people
I should never have **taken him into my confidence**, as he revealed my secret immediately to his family.
38. **Information** – facts about a situation, person, event, etc.
All the **information** about the examination was put up on the notice board.
39. **Earnestly** – very seriously, with conviction, gravely
The school committee is working **earnestly** to resolve all student issues.
40. **Proceed** – to continue as planned; to move forward or travel in a particular direction
The police have decided not to **proceed** with the case.
Let us **proceed** towards the cinema hall.
41. **Deceiving** – cheating, tricking, misleading
If you think you will pass the test by studying just for a few hours, you are **deceiving** yourself.
It is commonly known that looks can be **deceiving**.
42. **Talent** – a natural ability to be good at something, especially without being taught
Mohan's talent for singing became obvious when he was very young.
43. **Dishonesty** – the quality or act of not being honest
Her **dishonesty** landed her in prison.
44. **Respectfully** – in a way that shows that you want to be polite or honour someone
He bowed down **respectfully** before his old teacher.

45. **Regret** – a feeling of sadness about something sad or wrong, or about a mistake that you have made; a wish that it could have been different or better
I felt great **regret** when Dinesh had to leave college before finishing his graduation.
He informed us with great **regret** that he will not be able to attend the wedding.
46. **Cheerily** – in a bright and happy way, or in a way that makes you feel bright and happy
He waved **cheerily** from the balcony as I passed by his house.
47. **Hesitated** – paused before saying or doing something, often because you were uncertain or nervous about it
He **hesitated** before accepting the job in another city.
48. **Admitted** – agreed that something is true, especially unwillingly
Feroz hung his head in shame and **admitted** that he had lied to his father.
49. **Barber shop** – a shop where men's hair is cut and men are shaved
Most of the **barber shops** in Delhi are closed every Tuesday.
50. **Lingered** – took a long time to leave or disappear
We **lingered** outside the hotel, hoping to see Shah Rukh Khan.
51. **Swede** – a person from Sweden; also a round vegetable with dark yellow flesh and a brown or purple skin
Alfred Nobel was a **Swede** who invented dynamite.
The stew had lots of **swedes** and potatoes.
52. **Concluded** – decided, ended, supposed
The meeting **concluded** with a vote of thanks to the speaker.
I saw the guest packing his bags; so I **concluded** he would be leaving today.
53. **Exhausted** – finished; very tired
We had **exhausted** all the rice in the house.
My mother is completely **exhausted** with all the preparations for Diwali.

54. **Credit** – a method of paying for goods or services at a later time, usually paying interest as well as the original money; praise, approval or honour
They decided to buy the television on **credit**.
Sunita's boss took all the **credit** for her work on the project.
55. **Poolroom** – a room where a game of pool is played; pool is played using long thin poles called cues, which are used to hit 16 coloured balls into six holes around the edge of a table covered in soft cloth
The boys were all gathered in the **poolroom**, playing pool on the new pool table.



A Pool Table

56. **Pursued** – chased, run after
The murderer was **pursued** day and night till he was caught.
57. **Opinions** – thoughts or beliefs about something or someone
We asked all the parents to give their **opinions** on the new education policy.
58. **Scarcely** – almost not
She could **scarcely** walk after her accident.
59. **Suggested** – to mention an idea, possible plan, or action for other people to consider
Her mother **suggested** that we all come over to her house to study for the exam.
60. **Greasy** – covered with or full of fat or oil
You should not eat this **greasy** food from the dhabha every day.
61. **Helpfulness** – the quality of being helpful
I was really touched by the **helpfulness** of our neighbours when my mother fell sick.

62. **Brotherly love** – showing kindness, interest and love that you would expect a brother to show
He helped his friend's family out of **brotherly love** for his friend.
63. **Charged** – asked for a particular amount of money for something, especially a service or activity
They **charged** a very high fee for the hospital bed.
64. **Presence** – appearance, attendance, existence
The **presence** of the film star added a lot of glamour to the festival.
65. **Refreshing** – reviving, restoring, stimulating
Lemon juice is very **refreshing** in summer.
66. **Pastures** – land covered with grass and other low plants suitable for grazing cattle, sheep
The shepherd has taken the sheep to the **pasture** early in the morning.
67. **Creek** – short arm of river, inlet or sea coast
We went for a picnic to the meadow near the **creek**.



A creek in Mumbai

68. **Foolishness** – the quality of being unwise, stupid or not showing good judgement
Gaurav's friends laughed at his **foolishness** for jumping into an empty swimming pool.
69. **Debt** – a sum of money that is owed or due, the state of owing money, a feeling of gratitude for a service or honour
I am still paying back the **debt** I took for my college education.

70. **Commented** – remarked, discussed, observed
The health ministry **commented** on the unhealthy conditions of hospitals.
71. **Adventures** – unusual, exciting, and possibly dangerous activities, such as a trip or experience, or the excitement produced by such activities
She had some exciting **adventures** on her trip to Ladakh.
72. **Philosophy** – a particular system of beliefs, values, and principles; the way that someone thinks about life and deals with it
Vedic **philosophy** is based on ancient Hindu texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and the Mahabharata.
His **philosophy** of life was simple – live for the present only.
73. **Simplicity** – the quality or condition of being easy to understand, clarity, uncomplicated
His **simplicity** and humility have endeared him to both teachers and students.
74. **Strengthened** – made stronger, reinforced
The fence must be **strengthened** before the monsoons; otherwise it will fall down.
He **strengthened** his body by regular exercise and nutritious food.
75. **Meadows** – grassy lands and fields
The children ran around happily in the **meadow**.



A meadow

76. **Woods** – forests
The **woods** surrounding the resort are open for trekking.
77. **Resumed** – restart, recommence, reopen
The cricket match **resumed** as soon as the rain stopped.

78. **Cornered** – a person or animal forced into a place or situation from where it is difficult to escape, having a specified number of corners
The guard dog **cornered** the trespassers and would not let them escape.
79. **Laying plans** – preparing a plan or a method of doing something
The students were busy **laying plans** for their summer holidays.
80. **Terror** – extreme fear
She screamed in **terror** when two men suddenly appeared out of the dark night.
81. **Sighed** – to breathe out slowly and noisily, expressing tiredness, sadness, pleasure, etc.
The teacher **sighed** when she saw Aruna's untidy handwriting.
82. **Trunk** – a large, strong container that is used for storing clothes and personal possessions, often when travelling or going to live in a new place
She packed all her belonging in a steel **trunk** and left for the railway station.



A trunk

83. **Swearing** – using words that are rude or offensive, as a way of emphasizing what you mean, or as a way of insulting someone or something; promising or saying firmly that you are telling the truth or that you will do something or behave in a particular way
The taxi driver started **swearing** at Suresh when he did not have enough money to pay the fare.
She continued **swearing** that she was telling the truth.
84. **Enormous** – very big, huge
My grandfather left me an **enormous** sum of money.

85. **Nonsense** – an idea, something said or written, or behaviour that is silly or stupid
Please don't scare your little brother with all this **nonsense** about ghosts.
86. **Represent** – be entitled or appointed to speak or act on someone's behalf
The senior lawyer will **represent** Tom, who has been accused of murder.
87. **Properties** – buildings or areas of land, or both together
He is very rich and owns many **properties** across Delhi.
88. **Impressed** – feeling or showing respect or admiration
I was very **impressed** by her new computer.
89. **Retired** – left a place; went to bed; left a job or stopped working because of age or ill health; stopped taking part in a game or competition because of illness or injury
They **retired** to their bedrooms after dinner.
He **retired** early to bed as he was very tired.
Her father **retired** from the job after working for forty years.
The batsman **retired** hurt after being hit in the stomach by the ball.
90. **Seized** – snatched, grabbed, took hold of
The police raided the godown and **seized** many bags of stolen goods.
91. **Retreat** – step back, withdraw, pull back
To **retreat** in the face of danger is a wise step.
92. **Disrespectful** – lack of respect, rude, impolite
The teacher refused to tolerate the **disrespectful** behavior of the students any longer.
93. **Treatment** – the way you deal with or behave towards something or someone, a patient undergoing medical help
His **treatment** of his domestic help is very bad.
I am undergoing **treatment** for my heart problem at one of the best hospitals in the city.
94. **Peering** – looking carefully or with difficulty
He was **peering** at the notice, trying to read it.

95. **Examined** – to look at, or consider a person or thing carefully and in detail in order to discover something about them; to test someone's knowledge or skill in a particular subject
The experts **examined** the wreckage of the airplane to find out how the accident happened.
We were **examined** on Indian history on Monday.
96. **Barn** – a large building on a farm in which animals or hay and grain are kept
The cows were kept in a large **barn**, far away from the house.
97. **Stable** – a building in which horses are kept; firmly fixed or not likely to move or change
The beautiful black horse was missing from the **stable**.
The house can collapse if its foundations are not **stable**.
98. **Reasonably** – in a sensible way, to be moderate, fairly well
The guard was talking **reasonably** to the latecomers, but they were rude to him.
This dress is quite **reasonably** priced.
99. **Failure** – the fact of someone or something not succeeding
The plan was a total **failure**, and we never managed to complete the work.
100. **Slow-spoken** – speaking slowly
In a **slow-spoken** manner, he explained the entire situation to the crowd.
101. **Pictured** – imagined
She **pictured** herself living a life of luxury with all the money she would win in the contest.
102. **Limits** – the greatest amounts, numbers, or levels of something that is either possible or allowed
We should spend only within the **limits** of our income.
103. **Treasure** – very valuable things, usually in the form of a store of precious metals, precious stones, or money
The police recovered the stolen art **treasure** from a trunk in his house.
104. **Shameful** – deserving blame, or being a reason for feeling ashamed
The family kept their **shameful** secret hidden for years.

105. **Promising** – something that is promising shows signs that it is going to be successful or enjoyable; making something certain to happen
She won the award for the most **promising** new actress of the year.
Amit kept **promising** me that he would return the money he owed me.
106. **Ditches** – trench, channel, drain, gutter
The **ditches** at the sides of the lane are never cleaned.
107. **Prevent** – to stop something from happening or someone from doing something
The police could not **prevent** the crime from happening.
108. **Loafing** – avoiding work
Sushil was **loafing** around the school corridor when the Principal caught him.
109. **Quarrelling** – having an angry disagreement between two or more people or groups
We have made Sunil and Prabha sit separately to prevent them from **quarrelling**.

4. Questions

Read and Find Out

1. **Why is the lawyer sent to New Mullion? What does he first think about the place?**
2. **Who befriends him? Where does he take him?**
3. **What does Bill say about Lutkins?**
4. **What more does Bill say about Lutkins and his family?**
5. **Does the narrator serve the summons that day?**
6. **Who is Lutkins?**

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 practice 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?

5. Suggested reading

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