

Book Review

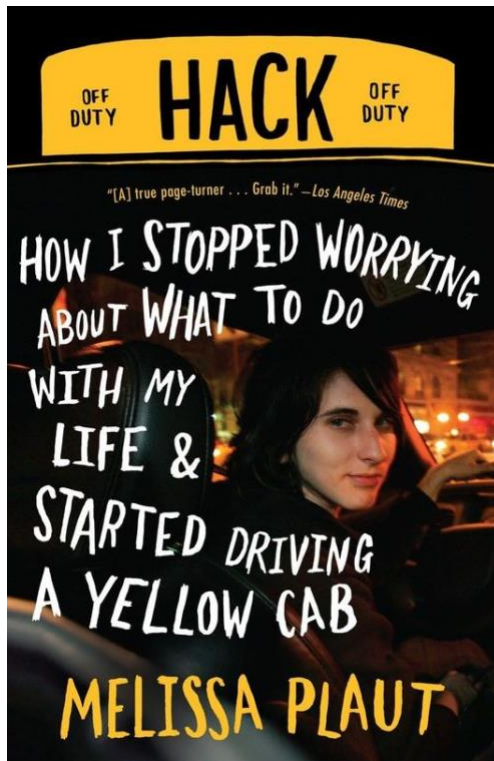
Hack: How I Stopped Worrying About What to Do with My Life and Started Driving a Yellow Cab Hardcover – August 28, 2007

Author: Melissa Plaut

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First Edition (2007), 237 pages

Random House Publishing Group



Description automatically generated Usually I don't read off beat books by random writers, but "Hack: How I Stopped Worrying About What to Do with My Life and Started Driving a Yellow Cab" somehow drew my interest. Melissa Plaut, the author of the book is a free spirited young woman who decided to drive yellow cab in New York City as an adventure. She also had to earn a living after losing her job in a corporate office.

Hack gives an intimate look at the life of a New York City taxi driver which is full of danger, frustration, sexual abuse and mistreatment by passengers and cops alike. A woman taxi driver in New York City is an anomaly and I give credit to Ms. Plaut for toughing it out.

Plaut, a white girl from the suburbs of New York, joined the 1 percent of female taxi drivers working in NYC. After graduating from college, she decided that driving a taxi was the adventure she was searching for, and completed the cumbersome paperwork and exams in order to get her taxi license. Like all drivers that she knows, Melissa is borderline broke, relying on the money from her daily shifts and gloating about any tip she receives.

The pursuit of a sustainable living is the driving force of the taxi cab drivers in New York and provides the motivation to spend hours at the wheel. Drivers work long stressful hours, often skipping bathroom breaks, altering natural sleep schedules, and putting up with obnoxious New Yorkers—all so that they can make enough money to pay back the dispatcher (from whom they technically rent the car), cover gas costs, and then go home with sufficient pocket cash to pay bills and feed families.

Hack is easy to read and initially engaging. Like the nature of the job itself, Hack reads as a repetitive cycle of passengers and street names. The reader gets a feel for the occasionally stimulating but mostly monotonous hours on the job. Though there are some reflective pieces about New York City and its people, Hack is filled with “route talk.” Route talk is explained as boring conversation “when people tell you how they arrived, or how they came, how they got on the road, which road, how long it took.” Overall, this was a different kind of read and I found it enjoyable.