

Day 2: The day shift

Mitch arrives at the depot, and today, Crusty's car is already there. He takes the Go-pro out of his bag and gets ready to take some footage as he walks into the driver's room. He starts filming from the car park so he can get some perspective of the walk in. As he gets to the door, he looks in and sees Crusty circled by about 10 drivers', as he is being quite animated in telling them the story of how he conquered the wanker. Mitch opens the door and is spotted by Crusty. He looks at him and then yells across the room;

"Here he is boys, my partner in crime."

Mitch is then greeted by the masses with comments such as;

'Movie man', 'Comic boy', 'Wanker killer', 'Rosie's new boyfriend', and so on.

Holding the Go-pro camera stealthily in his right hand, he walks toward the crowd with a confident grin, as he feels now, that he has been welcomed into the fold.

Crusty then puts his arm around him and says;

"I was just telling the boys how we put that wanker back in his place."

Mitch replies; "I don't think there was too much 'we' involved Crusty, I think you were the one who conquered the wanker" to which the other drivers gave a bit of a cheer.

"Oh, you are too modest Mitch. You may have only played a small role, but a truly important one at that. Actually the boys were asking if it is possible to get a copy of that video" asks Crusty.

"I'm not sure mate, I'll have to ask for you," replies Mitch. "Why can't you get a copy from the buses video in here?"

"Graemes' having a bit of a stress attack this morning, I might hit him up a bit later, when he has calmed down a little. Anyway, we better get going, because we have some children to torment," says

Crusty.

Crusty picks up his cash tin and starts heading out the door when Graeme leans over the counter and says:

"Try not to get any complaints today, okay Crusty."

"You know I always try, Graeme," replies Crusty. "But you know how it is mate, sometimes things just happen."

Graeme is left just shaking his head as Crusty and Mitch walk out into the yard.

"So why is Graeme so stressed out?" asks Mitch.

"I think he had a couple of no shows this morning, and he is trying to cover the runs till he can get a couple of casuals in to cover the shifts," answers Crusty.

"It's not a job I would want to do mate, it is way too stressful for me, I like being out on the road away from all the politics."

Crusty goes through all his pre-start checks and they head off to start the day. As they are driving out to the starting point, Mitch enquires about the animal story that Steve had mentioned to him the day before.

"Oh that," says Crusty. "Well we don't have much time now before we start picking up the kids. But it

was a time when the school decided to have a 'bring your pet to school day' for the preppy kids. Now when there is a job where something could go horribly wrong, they always seem to get me to do it."

"So what could go wrong?" asks Mitch with a smile.

"Don't you have a saying in the movie business about never working with children or animals?" says Crusty.

"Yes they do actually" replies Mitch.

"Well on this day I had to work with children, and animals," laughs Crusty.

"So what happened?" asks Mitch.

"Well it's a long story, but a good one. We have to start this run shortly, but that's good, because it will give you some perspective of the children I have to work with. And we have about half an hour downtime from when we finish this run, to the start of the next one. Trust me, it will be well worth the wait," says Crusty.

"You've got me all anxious now Crusty, I am going to be on the edge of my seat till I hear this now," says Mitch in expectation.

"Don't worry mate, these little cherubs will soon have you back in your seat trying to dodge the bullets,"

laughs Crusty.

"What do you mean by dodging bullets?" asks Mitch.

"Well, they aren't too bad in the morning, because if they get out of line, you just threaten to take them to the principal's office, and then they usually pull their heads in. But in the afternoon, you can have all sorts of mischief going on. We have an afternoon run later in the week, so just take note today and watch the difference. It's like Jekyll and Hyde," laughs Crusty.

"Alright, you're on," says Mitch. "Hey look, there's a big group of kids up at that stop, do we pick all of them up?"

"No, we are just doing the primary school today, so we grab the littlies only. Another bus will pick up the high school kids," he answers.

Crusty pulls up to the bus stop and most of the children have an e-card which they swipe as they get on. Then a few of the older kids notice that Crusty is driving the bus, and one of them yells out;

"Hey look its Crusty undies," which then starts a chain of taunts from a few of the boys. While this happening from outside the bus, a young girl with pig tails, only about six or seven years old walks up to Crusty and says;

"Mr Crusty undies," as Crusty interjects and says;

"It's not Mr Crusty undies, it's just Crusty."

Then in a very timid voice the young girl starts again;

"Mr Crusty, I forgot to bring my card today."

Crusty leans over to her and says in a quietly spoken voice;

"Well that's no good is it? You're going to have to walk to school today aren't you?"

Her bottom lip started to drop and you could see her eyes start to well up.

"But I can't walk to school, it's too far" she says.

Crusty leans over again and says;

"Well if I let you on the bus today, do you promise never to forget your card again?"

With almost a tear in her eye she looks up at Crusty and says;

"Yes Mr Crusty, I promise"

"Well that's a good girl then, you can go and sit down now" says Crusty with a smile on his face.

Mitch looks at him and says;

"What are you smiling at, that was just plain mean. She was nearly in tears."

"It's a life lesson Mitch."

"What do mean a life lesson?" says Mitch. "She's only a baby, why would she need a life lesson?"

"You don't have any kids do you Mitch?"

"No, but what's that got to do with it?"

"Well the kids these days are wrapped up in so much cotton wool, that every now and then, they need a little bit of a poke, just to remind them of what reality is," preaches Crusty.

"And your taking on the role of the reality checker in society, are you?" says Mitch.

"Ab-so-lutely," cries out Crusty. "And do you wanna know why I do it?"

"Why?" asks Mitch.

"Cos I can, hahaha" Crusty answers in a comical evil voice.

The rest of the morning school run goes fairly smoothly, with plenty of crusty undies taunts from the older kids, and also some of the younger ones trying to get away with it as well, but not without a scorned

look from Crusty. Which is enough to make them back pedal very quickly with a 'Sorry Mr Crusty'

When they arrived at the school, and all the kids are getting off the bus, the young girl in pig tails walks up to the front of the bus and says;

"Thank you for letting me on the bus without my card, Mr Crusty"

"That's alright sweetie. Now you go and have a good day, and remember to bring your card tomorrow okay," answers Crusty in calm fatherly tone.

"Yes Mr Crusty" she says as she walks off the bus and gives Crusty a little wave goodbye.

Mitch is now looking in total disbelief.

"You're unreal," he exclaims. "I have got no idea which direction you are going to turn next," as he shakes his head laughing.

Crusty now leans back in his seat, and says with a really cocky attitude;

"I bet she never forgets her card again, hey Mitch?"

Mitch is still shaking his head in disbelief as Crusty drives off to the next starting point. When they get there Mitch says;

"Right, now it's time to hear about this animal story."

Crusty shuts the engine down, spins around in his seat and says to Mitch:

"Right, what you have to do now is use your imagination, maybe even think of what I am about to say, like a cartoon. It is so surreal, that even when I think back on it, it feels like a cartoon."

"Are you serious?" exclaims Mitch.

"Totally serious, I'll start from the beginning, so you can get the full picture. Are you ready?" asks Crusty.

"As ready as I'll ever be, I think?" replies Mitch.

"It all started when the school approached the company about the idea for a 'Bring your Pet to school' day, and wanted to organise a special pick up service for the kids. Now the company won't do anything unless there is something in it for them, so I assume there was some form of under the table deal. As a general rule, there are no animals allowed on the bus unless they are disability workers, like Seeing Eye dogs or something similar. So they booked out one of the oldest buses in the fleet, which had vinyl seats and a lino floor. Then they got me to do the pickups. Now this is where it gets interesting," explains Crusty.

Mitch is now drawn in to what is about to come and says;

"I'm all ears mate, so what happened?"

"So I start the run, and get to the first stop. A little girl gets on with a cute little six-week old kitten. Then a little boy gets on, and he's carry a small puppy, which is only a couple of months old. So I drive on and at the next stop, a young boy gets on and he is carrying a shoe box with holes punched into the top of it. So I look at him and say; 'So what's in your box mate?' He took the lid off, and inside the box were three little mice. So I said to him; 'So are they blind?' And without missing a beat, he says to me;"

"NO! They don't drink."

"I couldn't help but laugh, wondering what sort of lifestyle he is growing up in, so I just told him to sit down. As I carried on, another little boy gets on, and he was carrying one of those cat cages. Inside it was a ferret and the next girl gets on and she is carrying this beautiful fluffy white rabbit and so on," Crusty pauses.

Mitch is now totally engrossed and asks;

"So what happened next?"

"Well I get to the last stop, and there is a little girl standing there with a pink pillowcase. As she walks onto the bus, I ask her; 'So what's in your pillowcase love?' She then looked up at me and said; 'It's a snake.' So my next question to her was; 'What kind of snake is it Miss Bindi Irwin?' And she replied; 'It's a carpet python.' So I then said to her that there is no carpet on this bus, so it will fit right in. And you would not believe it; this six-year old girl rolled her eyes at me and called me a dickhead. Now you know you are in strife when children start rolling their eyes at you."

"Actually I saw a few of them doing that to you this morning Crusty," laughs Mitch.

"Yeah so did I, actually it happens more often than I would like to admit," says Crusty.

"So you've got all these animals in the bus, what happened next?" asks Mitch.

"That's right Mitch, I have this menagerie in the bus, and they are all holding their pets," smiles Crusty as Mitch also chuckles.

"Then not far from the school, this impatient mum, driving a big four-wheel drive, cuts me off in traffic. And it's because at this time of the day, they all have this stupid mentality, where they think they have

to get in front of the bus. And you can see it in their eyes. You can even see them mouthing the words; 'I've gotta get in front of the bus. I've gotta get in front of the bus. I have just got to get in front of that bus!' So as to avoid an accident with this stupid woman in the four-wheel drive, I slam on the brakes. The chain of events that followed was when things got a little crazy. The kids go flying out of their seats, animals go flying everywhere. I hear the shoe box hit the floor and three mice go running up to the back of the bus. All the kids jump up onto their seats, screaming out; 'There are mice! There's a mouse!' Then the snake sticks his head out of his pillowcase, and sees three mice running up to the back of the bus. So he thinks to himself; 'Beauty, there's my breakfast,' so he slithers off to the back of the bus. Now by this stage, there are kids crying and screaming. The puppy dog has gone and got himself a mouthful of pussy. So the kitten starts scratching the crap out of the puppy's face, now there is blood pouring down his snout, and all over the kitten, so now he's got a mouthful of bloody pussy. And don't tell me you've never been there Mitch?" says Crusty as he stares straight into Mitch's eyes. He is in rapturous laughter at this point, so Crusty decides to carry on.

"Then I notice that the ferret has gotten out of his cage, and you know how cool ferrets are. They are

like the Fonzie of the animal world, the George Clooney of polecats, the Hugh Jackman of weasels; they have just got it going on, if you know what I mean. So he starts eyeing off the bunny rabbit, when he notices that the snake is sliding up on to the back seat for a sleep, because he now has three mice size lumps in his belly. And I could see him in my mirror, just contemplating whether he wanted a mouth full of hair, or would he prefer to nibble on something smooth and meaty with some lumps in it." says Crusty.

"An all familiar scenario these days," chuckles Mitch.

"So he decided to go for the bald smooth skinned snake, as most modern mammals do these days. Now by this time, I had just arrived at the school."

"So then what happened?" asks Mitch. "How did you deal with a situation like that?"

"I did what any professional and responsible bus driver would do."

"And what was that?" asks Mitch.

"I let the teachers deal with it," laughs Crusty.

"You're kidding?" exclaims Mitch.

"Nope, I just told the kids to grab their pets, well, what was left of them? As you know, some came on in

pairs, but left as a two for one deal. And I just told them to go and tell their teacher what had happened, and then I just drove off."

"That is awesome man," cries Mitch "So what happened to all the dead animals?"

"Oh the mice were the only ones that died," replies Crusty. "The rest were a little messed up, and some of the kids might be mentally scarred for a while. But it was an adventure."

"What happened with the woman who cut you off?" queries Mitch.

"Ahhh that lovely lady, well the dash camera got her, so I think she may have got stung for three new mice," laughs Crusty.

Crusty then fires up the bus and heads off to start the next run.

"So what are we up to now Crusty?" asks Mitch.

Crusty replies in a boyish excited tone;

"It's theme park time!"

"Excellent!" chirps Mitch. "Which one are we going to?"

"We are going to three of them," replies Crusty again

sounding excited.

"Why are you so excited about doing a theme park run?" Mitch asks curiously.

Crusty again replies using a silly voice;

"Well my magnanimous little friend, this is where we earn our lunch money."

"Firstly, do you know what magnanimous means?" asks Mitch.

"Not a fricken clue," replies Crusty. "But I am pretty sure it's a good thing."

"And secondly, what do mean when you say this is how we make our lunch money? You're not going to make me busk or something, are you?" says Mitch inquisitively.

Crusty laughs and says;

"No, nothing like that, but because we are picking up only tourists, and taking them to the theme parks, this is where we usually get some tips. Now as we are not a country that is known for giving tips, we are definitely a country who will graciously receive them."

"So how much would you pick up in tips, on an average day?" enquires Mitch.

"Unfortunately, it varies so greatly that you can't really put a number on it," replies Crusty. "If there are lot of Americans in town, you will do well, but if you get all Aussies on holidays, you will get nothing."

"So as much as it pains me to say this," Mitch responds. "I gather we are hoping to see a lot of the ol' 'sceptic tanks' today."

Crusty retorts in a loud American accent;

"That's right my boy, we want to see as many of those loud mouth mothers as we possibly can."

As they pull into the first stop, there is a group of Asian tourists waiting to get on. The doors open up and about four of them walk straight passed Crusty and go to sit down. Crusty looks at them, then puts his hand up and in a bellowing voice yells out;

"Stop right there! This is not a free bus. You must buy a ticket."

Then one of the younger Asians in the group pushes to the front and says;

"So sowwy Mr Bus dwiver, I pay for evwybody."

Crusty then nods his head and says to the young man in a horrible Asian accent;

"Arrrr, No worry sir, how many peepaw in your gwoop?"

"Leven," he replies.

"And which park you go to?" asks Crusty.

"Moowee worl" says the customer.

"Arrr Moowee world, which will be one hundred and ten dolla"

He hands the money over to Crusty, and he gives the customer eleven tickets. Then the man says very appreciatively;

"Tankyou sir, tank you werry much" as he bows his head.

Crusty then bows his head and says;

"My pweasure."

Mitch looks at Crusty in disgust and says to him;

"You racist bastard!"

"What do you mean?" asks Crusty.

"Mimicking him like that, that is so wrong," says Mitch.

Crusty then replies in a horrible Japanese accent as he turns to Mitch and says;

"Arrr my little grasshopper, you have so much to learn."

He then returns back to his own voice as he continues;

"It's all about the communication. If I speak to them in a broad Australian accent, they have no idea what I am saying to them. But if I mirror them, then they understand that tone. So I wasn't being disrespectful, I was just helping us both understand what needs to happen. I do it with Europeans, Scandinavians, English and even the Yanks. Trust me; it makes life a hell of a lot easier, though I can understand that from an outsider's perspective, it may look a little racist."

Mitch, now looking a little enlightened, says;

"Well I have never thought of it that way, because a lot of foreigners do have trouble understanding our accent don't they?"

Crusty laughs as he says in an overboard broad Australian accent;

"Too right mate, fair dinkum, slam a schooner down ya throat, wotcha gunna do knackers."

They carry on with the run, and Crusty mirrors many foreign accents along the way. When they reach their final destination, Mitch confronts Crusty, and asks him how much he has earned in tips.

"It hasn't been the best day. We may have just made enough to get a couple of cups of coffee," he says.

Mitch laughs and says:

"That's alright mate, you don't have to get me a cup of coffee, and that might leave you enough to get yourself sausage roll."

"That's if I ate sausage," laughs Crusty. "But I may just roll it over for another day and get something decent."

"What; Like a new personality?" jibes Mitch.

"Stuff you!" Crusty retorts. "Are you still stuck on the racist thing?"

"No, not at all," says Mitch. "So where are we off to next Mr Tipster?"

"Well, now we are off to check out some baby boobs" says Crusty again in his excited boy voice.

"What the hell are baby boobs? Or is this something I really don't want to know?" asks Mitch.

"These are the boobs that feed babies, and when I see some I'll let you know," says Crusty in a slightly haunting tone of voice. "This next run is what we like to call; 'the shopping run'. That is because we start out in the suburbs and travel to three different major shopping centres. Taking people to, and picking people up from doing their shopping."

"Now that sounds like fun," Mitch says sarcastically.

"Oh it can be Mitch," Crusty says with a touch of condescension. "Just remember, people are always people, and you never know which ones are going to be a great source of entertainment."

As they work their way through the run, Crusty cries out with displeasure;

"Oh no, here's trouble."

"What's wrong," asks Mitch.

"It's Bruno," Crusty says while shaking his head at the same time.

"What's up with Bruno?" inquires Mitch.

"He stinks!"

"It can't be that bad, can it?" says Mitch. "What is it like BO or something?"

"It's worse than that," says Crusty. "This guy smells like he has been sleeping in a dumpster out the back of an Indian restaurant on a hot summer's day. Its fricken putrid, and the worst part is; he loves to chat. He normally sits where you are at the moment, or right behind me, and just stinks out the cabin area."

"It can't be that bad, can it?" asks Mitch.

"Well guess what mate, you are about to find out."

As Crusty stops and opens the door, Bruno says in a very loud Italian accent;

"Crusty! I haven't seen you in ages, how have you been?"

"Yeah I've been pretty good thanks Bruno, so where are you off to?" he replies.

"Just down to the supermarket, thanks Crusty, not very far at all today."

"Excellent," says Crusty. "I'll get you there as fast as I can."

"No hurry Crusty, it's a beautiful day."

Crusty mumbles under his breath;

"Oh yes there is"

Bruno then looks at Mitch as he notices him in his usual seat holding a camera and says;

"So Crusty, who is your new friend?"

"Oh that's Mitch. He's a stand-up comedian. Why don't you have a chat to him while I get you to the shops as fast as I can?" answers Crusty.

Mitch looks around the bus and notices that all the other passengers are screwing up their noses or pulling their shirts up over their face. He then looks at crusty and sees that he has just turned the air conditioner up to full and pointed all the vents so they are blowing straight into his face. He then turns to Bruno, as he is gasping for air and says:

"So how are you Bruno?"

"I'm a good," says Bruno, with his broken English accent. "So, you're a funny man, are you? So how about you tell me a joke then."

At this point Mitch is still trying not to gag and says:

"Oh, I'm a professional now, so I only tell jokes when I'm getting paid."

"Oh, is that so," replies Bruno as he reaches into his pocket. "He you go son, here's a dollar, now you tell me a joke."

Crusty then jumps in with a big smile on his face and says:

"Yeah Mitch, tell the man a joke."

Mitch looks at Crusty with an almighty scowl and says:

"Alright then," as he thinks for a moment, takes a deep breath and then proceeds;