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INFLATABLE MAN

by

David Lowe

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c/- ICS & Associates
4th Floor
Cornelius Court
147A King Street
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia

tel (02) 9232 6955
fax (02) 9221 4091
email belindaics@optusnet.com.au
direct tel (02) 6493 6135
email davidlowe@acr.net.au

1. EXT. SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE. DAY. 1.

JACK KOPKA, a small, rotund, middle-aged guy in a large car, drives over the Harbour Bridge.

On top of his car sits a big inflatable man with a silly grin and welcoming arms, wobbling in the breeze. This is Little Jack.

Signs on the blow-up figure's front and back advertise "Kopka's Novelty Inflatables".

Jack drives fast and badly. He weaves through the traffic without indicating, prompting angry horn blasts from behind.

Jack sticks two fingers out the window in response.

JACK
Fuck you too!

2. EXT. CITY INTERSECTION. DAY. 2.

Jack waits impatiently for the lights to change. Suddenly a cheerful WINDSCREEN BOY is at his window.

WINDSCREEN BOY
Fancy a wash sir?

Jack glares at him. The windscreen boy smiles pleasantly and starts cleaning the windscreen.

WINDSCREEN BOY (CONT)
Nice car like this. It'd be a crime not to have a clean windscreen. Don't you think so sir?

The windscreen boy concentrates on his work.

Jack gets out of his car and picks up the bucket of soapy water. He upends the bucket over the boy's head like a hat.

The boy splutters, trying to pull the jammed bucket off his head.

The lights go green. Jack gets back into his car and drives off.

3. INT/EXT. BUNFORD'S INFLATABLES. DAY. 3.

Jack pulls up outside a building with a giant smiling, inflatable koala on the roof. A sign says "Bunford's True Blue Balloons and Novelties."

Inside, a meek skinny man, BUNFORD, sees Jack coming.

BUNFORD

Oh, Jesus.

Bunford locks the door and hides under his desk. Jack marches to the front door and hammers on it.

JACK

What have you done with my inflatables, Bunford?

Silence.

JACK (CONT)

Where've you got 'em? Eh?

All is quiet. Bunford listens. He hears the footsteps receding and scrabbles with one hand on top of the desk for the phone.

Jack gets an air rifle from the back seat of his car. He lines up the sight on the blow-up koala's ear. Bang!

Again Jack sights and fires. This time he hits the knee of the koala. It sags and begins to deflate.

A POLICEMAN sneaks up behind Jack.

As Jack reloads, the policeman dive-tackles him from behind and sends him sprawling to the ground.

4. INT. POLICE STATION. DAY. 4.

A police SERGEANT gives Jack back his possessions.

SERGEANT

Look Mr Kopka, you're very lucky Mr Bunford didn't press charges as it is.

CONT...

JACK

That proves he's guilty!

SERGEANT

It proves nothing of the sort Mr Kopka. As you well know, we fully investigated your allegations against Mr Bunford when your... troubles began.

JACK

Well who the hell is stealing my inflatables then? Who's got my panda?

SERGEANT

Our investigations are proceeding-

JACK

Investigations, investigations. You people wouldn't know how to investigate your own arseholes.

SERGEANT

Mr Kopka!

JACK

Wasting time, banging up innocent members of the public. It's a disgrace!

Jack makes for the door.

JACK (CONT)

This isn't the end of this.
You mark my words!

5. EXT. KOPKA'S NOVELTY INFLATABLES. DAY. 5.

ROY, a nervous young man in a cheap suit, stops outside a big ugly building surrounded by a high wire fence. An enormous inflatable replica of Jack, with welcoming arms, stands on top of the building.

This is Big Jack.

CONT...

"Kopka's Novelty Inflatables", says a sign on Big Jack's belly.

Roy opens the gate and walks towards the office.

6. INT. KOPKA'S INFLATABLES - OFFICE. DAY. 6.

Roy enters the office to see a grumpy-looking young secretary, FRAN.

The walls feature promotional pictures of a bizarre assortment of inflatable things, in-situ on top of buildings; dinosaurs, gorillas, clowns. They're framed like precious oils.

Roy smiles at Fran nervously.

FRAN
What do you want?

ROY
I'm here to see Jack.

Fran points to the door behind her.

FRAN
He's on his throne.

She goes back to her work.

7. INT. KOPKA'S OFFICE - CASTLE. DAY. 7.

The back of the warehouse is almost completely taken up with an enormous jumping castle.

A prominent sign says, "Remove Your Shoes!"

Obediently, Roy takes off his shoes and wobbles his way into the castle, trying to keep his balance.

JACK
Beautiful, isn't it?

Roy turns a corner to find Jack in the castle's inner sanctum, sitting in an inflatable throne.

ROY
Uncle Jack?

CONT...

Jack wobbles around in his throne and smiles at his nephew.

JACK
Roy! I've got a job for you.

8. EXT. PARRAMATTA ROAD CAR YARD. DAY. 8.

Roy is with an angry CAR DEALER. The dealer points at his roof. There's nothing to see but a few frayed retaining ropes lying on the ground.

CAR DEALER
Six hundred dollar I pay
for hire of that panda. And
where is he. Eh?

ROY
Well, I was kind of hoping
you could tell me that.

CAR DEALER
Tell you? Tell you? I have
only one thing to tell you
young man: if your uncle
not find me that panda, he
will be paying me back my
money - with interest!

9. EXT. SUBURBAN STREET. DAY. 9.

Roy knocks on the door. It's opened by a little OLD LADY.

ROY
Good afternoon madam. My
name is Roy. I'm
investigating the
disappearance of a large
inflatable panda from a car
yard near here yesterday.

Roy shows the old lady a photograph of the panda.

ROY (CONT)
Have you seen this panda?

The old lady looks at the photograph, then looks at Roy like he's stark raving mad.

10. EXT. ANOTHER SUBURBAN STREET. DAY. 10.

The door opens to reveal a huge BIKIE with leather trousers and tattoos.

ROY
Hello, er... sir. I'm
investigating the
disappearance of an
inflatable panda- (from)

BIKIE
An inflatable what?!

ROY
An inflatable panda. We
think it might have blown
past this way sometime
yesterday...

The bikie guffaws loudly before slamming the door in his face.

11. EXT. ANOTHER SUBURBAN STREET. DAY. 11.

Roy is giving his rave to an oily middle-aged MAN.

ROY
Hello, I'm investigating
the disappearance of an
inflatable panda near here
early yesterday morning. We
were wondering if you might
have seen anything?

MAN
Would you like to come in?

12. INT. MAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM. DAY. 12.

Roy and the man sit with cups of tea. The man is checking his notes.

MAN
So this isn't the first
inflatable to have
disappeared then?

CONT...

ROY

Oh no, it's been going on for weeks now. There was a naked lady on top of a furniture shop down south somewhere, and a three-headed monster thing riding a surfboard at Dee Why. A dinosaur disappeared from a petrol station as well!

The man takes all this down.

MAN

Fascinating, fascinating.
Here, have another biscuit.

13. INT. JACK'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM. 13.

Jack and his long-suffering blonde wife, DARLENE, eat dinner.

Jack has an afternoon paper spread out across the table. He turns the page.

"Inflatables Disappear", says the headline. Jack is furious.

JACK

I tell him to be discreet,
and what does he do? He
talks to a muck-raking
journalist for Chrissake!

DARLENE

Roy's only a kid. What did
you expect? Why don't you
forget all this stuff?
Let's go somewhere
romantic. One of those
weekend getaways.

Darlene tries to snuggle up to Jack, but he bats her off like a gnat.

JACK

Where do you think the
money comes from, woman?
Out of thin air?

CONT...

JACK (CONT)
Any more of this kind of
publicity and I'll be
finished!

DARLENE
Come on honey. You've still
got lots of money. Let's go
stay at a beach somewhere.

JACK
I don't like the beach.

DARLENE
Sure you do. The Gold
Coast. Maybe even Hawaii.
One of those resorts.

JACK
Tell you what, Darlene,
here's five bucks.

He gives her the money.

JACK (CONT)
You go to the beach, and
I'll go to bed.

DARLENE
What's this for?

JACK
Buy a bus ticket to bloody
Bondi.

He stomps off. Darlene bursts into tears.

14. INT. JACK'S BEDROOM. NIGHT. 14.

Jack and Darlene sleep on opposite sides of the
bed. All is quiet. Suddenly, one wall of the room
rises into the air. Headlights blaze out of the
darkness beyond. An engine revs like a growling
animal.

Jack wakes up. He shakes his wife.

JACK
Darlene. Darl!

CONT...

But she's like a corpse, and rolls out of bed, hitting the floor with a thump.

Back to the wall, Jack is blinded by the light.

An unmanned, PHANTOM FORKLIFT TRUCK drives into the bedroom. Jack cowers, terrified, as the forklift picks up the bed, with him still in it.

The forklift carries the bed out of the room.

15. EXT. NIGHTMARE WORLD. NIGHT. 15.

The forklift carries Jack into a black void.

Trying to work out what's happening, Jack sits up, and then stands, in his pyjamas. He balances with difficulty.

Suddenly the forklift stops. Gears whine.

Jack is lifted - high, high into the air, impossibly high. The platform stops with a jerk. Jack loses his balance.

He falls...

And lands - splat - like a squashed insect.

The surface is dark, but reflective. Jack can see his face in it. Suddenly he's drenched with soapy water.

He looks up to see the giant, leering face of the windscreen boy, brandishing his enormous squeegee like a weapon.

Jack tries to stand, He slips, falls, and stands again as the squeegee approaches like a tidal wave.

Screaming and flailing, Jack tries to escape...

16. INT. JACK'S BEDROOM. MORNING. 16.

Jack wakes from his nightmare, still screaming and flailing, to find Darlene, fully-dressed, bags packed and in mid-tirade.

CONT...

DARLENE

... and if you expect me to put up with that sort of nonsense every night then you're wrong! You really are a selfish bastard, Jack. Don't bother getting up. I'm off... For good!

Suitcase in hand, Darlene slams the door behind her. Jack blinks blearily.

17. INT. JACK'S KITCHEN. MORNING. 17.

Jack reads the morning paper while he eats his burned toast. The front page article is about a group called Citizens for Aesthetic Cities.

In a photograph, the leader of the group, Mrs Roger, a tall, elegant woman in her 50s, is posed in front of a takeaway food shop which is topped by a giant inflatable hamburger.

"Stop this visual pollution" says the headline.

JACK

Visual pollution my arse!

18. EXT. CITY. MORNING. 18.

Jack drives through the city, talking to himself.

JACK

If you want a job done properly, you've got to do it yourself.

Jack's way is blocked by a pedestrian mall.

He drives illegally through the mall until he reaches a barricade, then stops his car and gets out.

19. EXT. MALL. DAY. 19.

Jack stomps towards the offices of the Citizens for Aesthetic Cities.

CONT...

Jack's way is blocked by a sweetly smiling hippie BUSKER with a guitar. She sings "All You Need Is Love" while a small, appreciative crowd looks on.

Impatient, Jack tries to walk past her. He's blocked by the neck of the busker's guitar.

He tries to go the other way, but she swings around to block him again, still singing sweetly.

Jack grabs the busker's guitar and snaps it over his knee, then gives the pieces back to her.

The busker bursts into tears while the onlookers stare at Jack, dumbfounded.

He continues walking.

20. EXT. OUTSIDE CAC OFFICES. DAY. 20.

Jack notices, with satisfaction, that one of his inflatables is still in place above an office supplies shop.

It's directly across the road from the offices of Citizens for Aesthetic Cities: an enormous, red, pencil-headed monster.

21. INT. CAC OFFICES - SECOND FLOOR. DAY. 21.

Jack storms past the young RECEPTIONIST and through a door marked "Director".

RECEPTIONIST

Excuse me, sir. You can't
go in there!

22. INT. MRS ROGER'S OFFICE. MORNING. 22.

The pencil-headed monster is plainly visible through the window behind MRS ROGER, the tall, elegant, older woman from the newspaper. She's on the phone.

MRS ROGER

... Look darling. I'll ring
you back. All right?
Something's come up.

CONT...

Mrs Roger looks down at Jack with distaste.

MRS ROGER
Who the blazes are you?

Jack produces a business card with a picture of the inflatable man on his roof - Big Jack.

JACK
Jack Kopka. What have you
done with my inflatables?

MRS ROGER
Your what?

Jack points at the pencil-headed monster by way of explanation.

JACK
My inflatables.

Mrs Roger turns to look.

MRS ROGER
Oh. I see. Well, Mr Kopka.
All I know about your...
inflatables... is that they
are an abomination. If
you've misplaced them it's
no concern of mine.

JACK
Don't get smart with me,
lady. I can read a paper. I
know what's been going on.

MRS ROGER
Are you threatening me, you
horrid little man?

Jack steps up and eyeballs her as best he can.

JACK
Where's my panda?

MRS ROGER
I really don't know what
you're talking about.

CONT...

JACK

Where are the others? What have you bloody done with them?

MRS ROGER

Go away.

JACK

Like hell I will! I'm going to stay here until... until...

Jack sees something out the window which makes him stop in his tracks.

Mrs Roger turns to see what it is.

The pencil-headed monster across the street has disappeared.

Mrs Roger seems just as surprised as Jack.

23. EXT. OUTSIDE CAC OFFICES. DAY. 23.

Jack is unceremoniously deposited outside the CAC by a burly SECURITY GUARD.

The security guard glares at the smaller man, goes back inside, and slams the door.

24. EXT. MALL. DAY. 24.

Jack returns to where his car was parked to find it missing.

He looks up to see it on the back of a council truck, driving away into the traffic, the inflatable man still on the roof, smiling stupidly.

A large yellow sign on the back windscreen says, "IMPOUNDED VEHICLE - Contact City Council".

Disgusted, Jack walks away down the street.

Ahead, he sees the busker whose guitar he broke earlier. She's talking to a POLICEMAN, who's taking notes.

Hurriedly, Jack scurries off the other way.

25. EXT. CITY STREETS. DAY.**25.**

Jack stomps along down the middle of the footpath, eyes straight ahead, forcing other pedestrians to go round him.

Construction works make the footpath even more narrow than usual.

A MOTHER with a BABY in a pram approaches from the other direction. Jack doesn't give her any room, and she has to swerve violently to avoid him. The baby loses his toy rabbit.

Jack steps on the rabbit, squashing it into the mud. The baby cries.

The mother glares at Jack, but he just keeps going.

Suddenly he finds his way blocked by an old SALVATION ARMY MAN, collecting from his wheelchair.

Jack stops. His eyes meet those of the Salvo Man. The Salvo Man's blue eyes pull Jack in like a tractor beam. He can't look away.

Almost involuntarily, Jack's hand creeps towards his pocket. The Salvo Man smiles benevolently, like Jesus Christ.

Redemption seems at hand...

But a truck horn breaks the spell. Jack shakes his head, sneers, and walks away.

The Salvo Man looks after him sadly.

26. EXT. JACK'S HOUSE. AFTERNOON.**26.**

Jack's house is a big ugly mansion in a street full of little old-fashioned houses.

The letterbox has a big package in it. Jack's mood brightens momentarily. But the package is addressed to his wife. Jack tears it open anyway. It's a box of romance novels with garish covers.

Jack throws the package into the bin and goes inside.

27. INT. JACK'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.**27.**

Still dressed, Jack tosses and turns on the unmade bed, sleeping restlessly.

Finally he lies still, snoring. He continues sleeping soundly as the wall flies up and the forklift enters, engine rumbling and lights blazing.

As before, the forklift lifts the bed into the air. As it spins to leave the room, Jack wakes, horrified.

The forklift carries Jack and the bed out of the room.

28. EXT. NIGHTMARE WORLD. NIGHT.**28.**

Jack tries to see if anyone's driving the phantom forklift, but the headlights make it impossible to see.

Suddenly the machine stops. Gears whine as Jack is lowered to the ground.

A powerful spotlight cracks on from somewhere above, creating a circle of light in the void.

From out of the darkness comes a strange squeaking noise. Something is approaching.

Jack cowers in the bed, unsure what fate awaits him,

From out of the darkness comes a figure in a wheelchair. It's the old Salvo Man, balancing his donation tin on his knees.

Jack relaxes a little.

The Salvo Man wheels towards him and stops. He rattles his tin hopefully at Jack.

Jack reaches into his pyjama pockets for change. There's nothing there.

JACK
Bloody hell.

CONT...

The Salvo Man frowns.

JACK (CONT)
Sorry, sorry. Hang on.

Increasingly frantic, Jack upends the bedclothes, looking for coins. But there's nothing.

Sadly, the Salvo Man turns in his wheelchair and starts wheeling away.

Pulling his pillow to pieces, Jack finds his chequebook inside it. He waves it after the Salvo Man, triumphantly.

JACK (CONT)
Wait, wait! Won't you take
a cheque?!

Jack gets out of bed and runs after the Salvo Man in his pyjamas. The spotlight follows him. But it's too late. The Salvo Man has gone.

From out of the darkness, Jack can hear thunderous marching feet approaching; monstrous tubas, giant's trumpets screeching like pterodactyls...

He covers his ears as the terrifying sounds come closer.

From all around, giant Salvation Army band members in full uniform converge on Jack.

Underlit like ghouls, they play a weird, twisted version of "When the Saints go Marching In".

They bang their tambourines and blow their instruments, marching and circling in military formation.

Jack runs this way and that. The spotlight follows him as he tries to get away from the huge shiny boots which rise and fall around him. He's in danger of being crushed like a bug.

With relentless determination, giant's hands strike monstrous tambourines, trumpets blast and drums are thumped.

Jack crouches and shrieks in terror as he's deafened by the hideous cacophony.

29. INT. JACK'S BEDROOM. DAY. 29.

Jack wakes from the nightmare, screaming and alone.

30. EXT. STREET IN INDUSTRIAL AREA. DAY. 30.

Jack stumbles along the street. His clothes, naturally enough, look like they've been slept in. He looks like a wreck. Passersby look at him strangely.

When he reaches the entrance of Kopka's Novelty Inflatables, Jack stops in his tracks.

The huge inflatable man from the roof is gone.

31. INT. KOPKA'S NOVELTY INFLATABLES. 31.

Roy and Fran are sitting nervously on the couch. Roy stands as Jack comes in.

ROY

The council rang to say
they've got your car, Uncle
Jack.

JACK

Fuck the car. Where's Big
Jack gone? Fran? Why
haven't you rung the
police?

He wheels on Roy.

JACK (CONT)

Didn't I tell you to piss
off and not come back?

ROY

Yeah I know you did Uncle
Jack. Fran asked me to
come.

JACK

What?

FRAN

It's about my salary, Mr
Kopka. I haven't been paid.

CONT...

JACK

Paid? Paid? Here I am
facing the greatest crisis
in the history of Kopka's
Novelty Inflatables and you
want to be paid?!

ROY

Fran says you haven't paid
her once since she started
here.

JACK

Of course I haven't paid
her. She's here on work
experience. Aren't you?

Fran bursts into tears.

FRAN

No I am not!

She picks up her bag and storms toward the door,
dragging Roy after her.

FRAN (CONT)

And as far as I'm concerned
you and you're shitty
inflatables can go to hell!

Fran and Roy leave. Jack looks truly shaken.

32. EXT. KOPKA'S NOVELTY INFLATABLES. DAY. 32.

The sign on the door says "CLOSED".

33. INT. COUNSELLOR'S OFFICE. AFTERNOON. 33.

It's a warm sleepy afternoon. Sun streams through
the window as Jack lies on a leather couch.

The COUNSELLOR is a middle-aged man with glasses
and a three-piece suit.

COUNSELLOR

How would you describe your
childhood? Was it happy?

CONT...

JACK

Is this leading somewhere?
Like I said, I'm here to
talk about the nightmares.

COUNSELLOR

We can talk about whatever
you want, Mr Kopka.
Anything. I'm all ears.
Tell me, what kind of
business are you in?

JACK

I'm in inflatables. You
know, blow-up monsters and
things for the tops of
buildings.

The counsellor is having trouble staying awake. He
wakes up enough to realise Jack has stopped
speaking.

COUNSELLOR

Go on, go on.

JACK

So anyway, the inflatables
start disappearing. Ten
years building up the
business, clients all over
town. I was making good
money. Then this happens.

The counsellor can't keep his eyes open.

COUNSELLOR

What happens?

JACK

I told you. They started
disappearing! That's when
the nightmares started. You
can't insure novelty
inflatables, you know. How
long's the business gonna
last at eight thousand
bucks a pop?

Jack realises the counsellor is asleep.

CONT...

JACK (CONT)
Hey Sigmund. You awake?

Jack pokes the counsellor. He slumps over,
apparently unconscious.

JACK (CONT)
Bloody fraud.

Suddenly the wall of the office slides up to reveal
darkness beyond. The sunlight streaming through the
window fades and disappears.

JACK (CONT)
Oh no.

Headlights blaze out of the void as an engine
roars. The phantom forklift approaches.

Like a rabbit, Jack is transfixed.

The forklift picks up Jack, couch and all, and
carries him from the room.

34. EXT. NIGHTMARE WORLD. NIGHT. 34.

The forklift carries Jack down an avenue of people,
all standing quietly in the darkness.

The windscreen boy is there, the police sergeant,
Jack's wife Darlene, the Salvation Army man and the
band members, the lady with the pram, Bunford, the
hippie busker with her broken guitar, Mrs Rogers
and her secretary; all the people Jack has mis-
treated and abused.

They line the avenue as though they're watching a
man on the way to his execution.

The forklift drives relentlessly on. Jack looks
from one face to another for a trace of pity or
emotion.

But the faces are blank, bearing witness.

Ahead, looming out of the darkness, are a great
pair of metal doors. They open by themselves as the
forklift approaches.

Bright light blazes from within.

35. INT. NIGHTMARE CHURCH. NIGHT.**35.**

Jack cowers on his couch as the forklift carries him through the doors.

He finds himself at one end of a long, very high, windowless room. Inside, it's arranged like a church.

The forklift carries Jack down the centre aisle. On each side are oversize pews, occupied by huge inflatable creatures.

His fear forgotten, Jack's eyes flick in amazement from one enormous object to another.

The gorilla, naked lady, pencil monster, dinosaur, clown, three-headed surf demon; all and more besides are here.

The inflatables follow Jack with their eyes.

The phantom forklift steers him relentlessly onward, like a bride or a baby about to be baptised.

Jack smiles and fights back a tear as he sees the panda waving from among the ranks of the inflatables.

Ahead, the light becomes brighter, blindingly so. And then the forklift stops.

Out of the brightness, an enormous shape looms over Jack as he's held aloft on the forklift.

It's Big Jack, the blow-up man from the roof of Kopka's Novelty Inflatables.

Up close he's a terrifying sight, with giant staring eyes and a horribly cheerful grin of bared teeth.

Jack is in heaven.

In an echo of Michelangelo's painting "Creation", his hand stretches out to touch the huge inflatable forefinger of Big Jack.

Angels sing as all dissolves to white..