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About 2,300 words

6000 Degrees of Kevin Bacon
by
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Protein. Filaments. 22β 117° 294° Counterclockwise rotation spiraling down
tumbling down filament overtakes filament - bounces off protein. Microscopic rain. A
dry waterfall buffets downward bounces off the valley floor below.

WEST LOS ANGELES, DAY — Jacques-Michael, hair salon to the stars Mr.
Jeffrey frantically scissors around some celebrity s head down down, cascade the
short, taut clippings of hair

The clippings have no more than a moment to bounce off the valley floor nee,
salon floor, before the ever vigilant broom of Columbian migr Manuela sweeps the
dead protein off the valley floor and out toward the back of the salon.

Manuela s broom is halted by the sudden imposition of a pointed black boot
Manuela straightens her hunched spine upward just in time to see a cascade of blondness
tumbling downward. Jane reaches her fingers into the pile of celebrity trimmings at the

head of Manuela's broom, pinches up a small lot, places it in a small polyethylene bag and zips it shut. Confused, Manuela is about to speak, but the apparition of blondness has, as suddenly as it appeared, vanished.

405 FREEWAY — a topless pink Beemer makes its way from West LA up to Thousand Oaks. The radio plays the easy melody of David Byrne's *Walk on Water* and the passenger behind the wheel, Jane, a hot and sticky blonde, smiles as her golden locks tumble mercilessly in the freeway breeze.

PARKING LOT — in the rear view mirror Jane snips about an inch off the end of her hair and places it in a polyethylene bag. She enters Clonionics where a pimple-faced, orange-bow-tied teenager clad in an outfit that resembles nothing so much as a Hot-Dog-on-a-Stick uniform greets her.

Jane: How much for six million clones each of two specimens?

Bow-tie punches some numbers on a hand-held calculator, then spins the calculator around and holds it up to Jane's face.

Jane: Hmm.

Bow-tie gives her a what-did-you-expect sort of shrug.

Jane: How much for six *thousand* clones each of two specimens?

Bow-tie displays another number for her and Jane smiles.

Jane: six thousand should be plenty I am, after all, me! Six thousand of me; six thousand of him; no matter how many don't work out or never meet there's got to be one pair that hooks up

* * *

Eighteen years later:

A HIGH SCHOOL SOMEWHERE IN AMERICA — Jane2222, Jane2224 and Jane2226, all dressed in identical cheerleader uniforms, shake blue and gold pom-poms high in the air as they finish a routine. Jane2226 tosses her pom-poms to the ground.

Jane2226: I m dying of thirst!

She dashes across a walkway to the chemistry building breezeway and a row of water fountains. Just as she s about to take a drink her face opens wide in horror She turns to stop Jane2222 and Jane2224 who follow behind her.

Jane2226: We d better get on that next routine!

Jane2222: What is it?

Jane2224: What s wrong?

Jane2226: It s nothing.

But she s too late to stop them Jane2222 looks down the breezeway behind the chemistry building Kevin2222 s hands fumble frantically under Jane1313 s blouse while their lips melt across each others face. Jane2222 is surprised shocked outraged devastated Jane2226 puts her hands on Jane2222 s shoulders,

Jane2226: Jane

Jane2222 bursts into tears.

DRAMA DEPARTMENT, INTERIOR — Jane4121 rehearses lines on stage:

Jane4121: All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances, and one woman in her time plays many parts

Standing off to the side Kevin5413, Kevin5415 and Kevin5417, pocket-protector-set members all, look on in awe. Their fascinated faces glow in the reflected limelight.

Kevin5413: She s beautiful!

Kevin5415: Why don t you ask her if she s going to the homecoming game tonight?

Kevin5413: Oh come on!

Kevin5417: Go talk to her!

Kevin5413: She s a goddess! A girl like Jane doesn t even know a guy like me exists.

INTERFAITH CHAPEL — Kevin4361, Kevin4363 and Kevin4365 calibrate their prayer mats built-in GPS transponders and align the mats, within one degree of arc, in the direction of Mecca.

LIBRARY CIRCULATION DESK — A librarian hands a book to Kevin3579 and says, Two weeks. Kevin3577 looks over his shoulder: Swarm Intelligence? What s that?

Kevin3579: It s really cool, it s this theory of intelligence and how flocking animals like bees and ants and stuff, about how the individual animals don t necessarily control their own destiny, but how they just fill whatever role the colony needs; so the same ant could be a forager or a scout one day, a midden worker the next, and a nest builder the day after that. There s no queen telling them what to do, they just respond to the dynamics of the society.

CAFETERIA — Jane1313, radiant, is surrounded by Jane1234, Jane1236 and Jane1238,

Jane1238: What was it like?

Jane1234: Where d you meet him?

Jane1236: Give us details!

In a seethingly brisk walk Jane2222 casts them aside as she pushes her way directly to Jane1313, she slaps her hard across the face. Jane1313 s cheeks throb beet red.

Jane2222: Bitch!

Jane1313 just glares at her.

Jane2222: Who do you think you are?

The anger in Jane1313 s head, the fire in her heart and the sting on her face all rage relentlessly at Jane2222.

Jane2222: If this is about that thing sophomore year with Kevin, first, I can t believe you re still holding a grudge about that, and second that was so not my fault, he totally came after me, I can t believe you re still trying to pin that on me!

Jane1313: This isn t even about you Jane, everything isn t always about you Jane! This is about me it s about what I want! I m sick of being tortured and humiliated here, I m not taking it anymore.

Jane2222: You ll always be a loser, nothing can ever change that.

Jane1313: You re probably right but I can dream you probably have no idea of my dreams you probably have no idea how much I ve always wanted to be like you

Jane2222: That s pathetic! I m everything you ll never be!

Jane1313 No, I won't ever be and you'll never have any idea what I wouldn't give just to be popular for one day

ORGANIC CHEM LAB — Students are interspersed between rows of tables covered with elaborate apparatus. As the bell rings they begin to leave the room and the instructor shouts out, Oh, and congratulations to Kevin, he's landed a full scholarship to Berkeley. *Kevin2224* beams as his classmates pat him on the back. He exits the classroom and strides into the thick, concupiscent air of the high school's main corridor. As he turns *Jane2224* walks past, Hey, Kevin, congratulations on the scholarship!

Kevin2224: Thanks... Jane thanks I sure haven't seen much of you this year.

Jane2224: I guess our schedules aren't really the same anymore.

Kevin2224: Yeah, I guess you're pretty busy with cheerleading and all that.

Jane2224: Yeah, it's a lot of time.

Kevin2224: I guess I just, I guess, I never thought of you as the cheerleader type.

Jane2224: Oh, I so wasn't! I felt really stupid at first but then, after a while, you just become that cheerleader I guess we all have it somewhere within us you just have to let yourself take on that role

Kevin2224: Yeah, anyway, you probably have to practice for the big game, I don't want to hold you up

Jane2224: Yeah, I should get going.

Kevin2224: It's great to see you, Jane.

Jane2224: Yeah it is maybe I ll see you at the game hey, Kevin how come we never dated?

Kevin2224: (*blushing*) I always thought we would

Jane2224: But then I became a cheerleader and you thought it was stupid?

Kevin2224: No, oh no everybody wants to date a cheerleader

Jane2224: Not brainiacs

Kevin2224: Jane, you must know, *everybody* wants to date a cheerleader.

Jane2224: It s true then, isn t it, there s no person in high school society who s more simultaneously ridiculed and desired than the cheerleader.

Kevin2224: Yeah... maybe maybe I ll see you at the game

UNDERNEATH GYMNASIUM BLEACHERS — *Jane5858* nervously speaks as *Kevin5858* jitters impatiently,

Jane5858: I m pregnant.

Kevin5858: Not by me you re not!

TREES BEHIND THE CHAPEL — *Jane1212* pushes an aggressive *Kevin1212* away,

Kevin1212: Come on Jane, everyone does it.

Jane1212: If everyone jumped off a bridge, would you?

STUDY HALL — *Jane2224* and *Jane2226* try to comfort *Jane2222*,

Jane2224: He s probably just stressed cause of the big game Jane, you know it doesn t mean anything you know he loves you

Jane2226: You re going to forgive him, aren t you? You just have to be there for him at the big game

Jane2222: Since when does the star quarterback ever treat the head cheerleader right? It s expected. It s no big deal. And maybe it isn t even a game I need to play anymore.

Jane2224: Jane,

Jane2222: Look you guys, it s still a couple hours till the game, why don t we blow this rat maze, go buy some shoes or something?

CAMPUS MALL — Kevin3131, Kevin3133 and Kevin3135 high-five each other and laugh,

Kevin3131: I ll catch you guys later, I ve gotta go dump Jane.

Kevin3135: You re breaking up with Jane?!

Kevin3133: Dude, are you crazy, she s the best.

Kevin3131: Come on you guys, senior year, this is like the best time of my life. I can t be tied down with Jane, I need my freedom, I can do anything now, I can t have her in my way. Anyway, later

Kevin3131 leaves the group and runs over to Jane3131 who is crossing the mall,

Kevin3131: Hey Jane, wait up, I need to talk to you.

Jane3131: Hi Kevin, I need to tell you something too.

Kevin3131: What s up?

Jane3131: It's just that, it's senior year, and we've had a lot of fun together, but I think I need my freedom now.

Kevin3131: What? You're not breaking up with me?

Jane3131: It's senior year, Kevin, I need to move on.

Kevin3131: Jane, come on, you know we're great together, and I need you now more than ever

THE BIG GAME — Kevin2222, clad in football padding and his #22 jersey, is an awesome, field-commanding presence. He looks over to the first row of the bleachers where the cheerleaders normally sit and sees: Jane2214, Jane2216, Jane2218, Jane2220 — Empty Seat — Jane2224, Jane2226. His eyes reveal disappointment and he mutters under his breath, To hell with her then. On the first series of downs, Kevin2222 flawlessly marshals his team down the field: perfect pass after precise hand-off after quarterback draw. Kevin2222 navigates his team through the defense like a knife through butter. 7-zip: easy. The other guys can do nothing with the ball and it's in Kevin2222's hands again. Blitz! Kevin2222's down. Dog-pile. When the players are all finally peeled off Kevin2222 is at the bottom unconscious.

Backup quarterback Kevin5555 just doesn't have it. His performance is like a bad cover of a classic song the words are the same, but the song just isn't there. By halftime the team is down 7-35.

SECOND HALF — Kevin2222 is back and ready to play. He looks to the bleachers still just an empty seat. The golden-boy is again golden touchdown after touchdown 14-35 21-35 28-35 and finally with a minute left in the game

35-35 When the team finally gets the ball back they've got seventy-eight yards and 22 seconds to go. Kevin2222 takes the snap. Kevin4444 goes deep. He's open. Kevin2222 sees him and cocks his arm to throw. And out of the corner of his eye he sees the bleachers in between pom-pom and uniform-clad Jane2220 and Jane2224 in street clothes, tears streaming down her face. Jane2222. Kevin4444 runs toward the end zone. The sun glints off Jane2222's tear-soaked cheek. Kevin4444 waves his arms, and in a millisecond of unconscious thought Kevin2222 balances a mental scale. His mind balances the momentum of this perfect game and the truth of who he is and what he's done to Jane2222. And in that instant of painful self-awareness he hesitates. The defenders swarm in. He's hit. He starts to go down. Rawhide pigskin. 22°, 94°, 113°. He crumbles. His towering form tumbles down to the valley floor below. The defenders bury Kevin2222. The ball pops loose. Everyone scrambles for it. Kevin1357 gets a hand on it, but one of the defenders scoops it up and runs it into the end zone. 35-42. The team loses.

HOSPITAL — Kevin2222's unconscious form sprawls across a hospital bed. A frightened Jane2222 huddles over him. A few hours earlier she'd wished him dead. Now her spiteful vision has come terrifyingly close to being fulfilled. Slowly Kevin comes to.

Kevin2222: Jane

Jane2222 (with a smile in her voice): Idiot.

She closes her eyes and takes his hand.

Kevin2222: Jane, I'm so sorry, it'll never happen again, I swear.

Jane2222: It better not.

FOOTBALL FIELD, NIGHT — a pulsing moon hangs on the horizon. *Jane2222*, buried under Kevin's giant letterman jacket, walks hand in hand with *Kevin2222*. As they glide across the crisp, dewy grass he continues to apologize:

Kevin2222: I don't know what I was thinking,

Jane2222: I agree.

Kevin2222: I could never love her, it was just so stupid, she could never mean to me what you mean to me — we're perfect for each other, we're soul-mates, I see that now.

Jane2222: Thank god! We are so lucky to have found each other. I look at other girls at school, maybe they're single, maybe they're with someone, but it's not really that great a fit — and I just think, we are sooo lucky to have found each other,

Kevin2222: Exactly! There's what, like 12,000 kids at school, what are the chances of us finding each other? It's some kind of miracle. I guess we were just meant to be.

Jane2222: I love you, Kevin.

Kevin2222: Rosebud.