

Welcome to my fanfic sequel to the graphic novel and film “Watchmen,” which takes place on an alternate timeline from our own. I highly recommend you read the graphic novel or see the movie, or motion comic before you proceed.

Watchmen: Reunion

by Brian Bohmueller

“As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light of meaning in the darkness of mere being.” -- C.G. Jung (cited in Chapter VII of the graphic novel, Watchmen)

The Nite Owl

The year is 2009. Twenty-four years have passed since the U.S. Empire and the Soviet Union reluctantly formed a global alliance of nations in response to the heinous destruction unleashed by Dr. Manhattan. Allegedly unleashed; Daniel White knew better. Like Ozymandius and Laurie, more than two decades of concealing the truth had taken its toll. After Ozy’s overdose five years ago, Laurie opted to join Gray Peace rather than continue assisting with Operation Omnipotence.

Daniel’s owl costume stuck uncomfortably to his skin in the evening humidity. Thankfully his mask was now one of biotech ink, providing superior surface conditions to evaporate his sweat, while disguising his emotions. Purple clouds reflected perfectly on Green Lane Reservoir’s surface, the single molecule thick diamond-polymer coating keeping the heavy water reserve pure. Crouching on the edge of the access platform, Daniel keeps his depression at bay by recollecting what has come to pass.

Initially, the decommissioning of all nuclear warheads in 1986 for use only in power generation removed much fear from the world’s citizenry. The resulting planetary regime secured peace among nations with its own version of fear, fear of Dr. Manhattan, an enemy unseen. The alliance subsequently poured trillions of dollars into quantum weapons research in anticipation of the return of Dr. Manhattan. Crime still ebbed and flowed in this brave new world, especially in recent years once the Cheney-Bin Laden administration privatized the world’s law enforcement. Drug and weapons manufacture were fully legalized to permit maximum reign of free enterprise. A united world brought a new era of peace between nations, but also a grand new era of corporate power, corruption and personal unrest.

Daniel was currently under contract with Metrocrime Limited, patrolling the fusion reserves at Green Lane. He had full authorization to use deadly force should anyone threaten the precious reservoir. Anger rose in Dan’s aging sinews. Damn Dr. Manhattan and Ozy both! Rorschach’s death played its part in Ozy’s scheme, but ultimately had been for nothing; in fact, his bloody demise served as a dark, splattered symbol of what befalls humankind when he seeks to engineer peace with destruction.

Dr. Manhattan

Dr. Manhattan (he preferred the moniker Jon) materialized without warning five meters directly in front of Daniel. Ionized air splayed its tendrils wildly like lightning all around him. The radiant, cobalt-blue man-deity hovered fully naked a few centimeters above the reservoir's surface. His arms stretched straight outward to either side, and the iconic emblem on his forehead remained, as ever, a symbol of the midnight hour's arrival.

From Jon's perspective, the world stood nearly still. Electromagnetic radiation colored the fringes of dusk with delightful splays of its nanometer wavelengths. Earth was his home, and though human no longer himself, humanity was his kin. It had taken many years of devoted conversation to unravel the mysteries of his relationship to humanity. Even so, the surface had barely been scratched. Yet he had chosen his destiny, even though he now could not see it. Jon smirked to himself, noting offhandedly that Ozymandias' global network of tachyon transmitters were still in full operation; Jon had expected no less from Earth's fearful leadership. The tachyon radiation effectively blocked his sight of the future, and that was comforting.

The present, however, was his own. His neural pathways were not unlimited as they were constrained by Universal laws; nevertheless, the kernel of matter strings he had transformed his brain into operated thousands of times faster than the human brain he had been born with. He had a few seconds to spare so he entered a state of deep contemplation.

He allowed all his memories to replay before him, beginning with prenatal awareness in the late second trimester of his gestation. So many peculiar possibilities within the realm of intelligent volition, far outweighing the mere genetic diversity in the human gene pool. How could he have been so wrong, thinking Laurie's conception was a thermodynamic miracle? Her uniqueness merely started with that random event. It was obvious to him now that the natural laws of the Universe fully support the manifestation of complex molecules, complex life, and complex intelligence. The evolutionary model is a strong one. Given enough time, random mixing would certainly grow in complexity in this particular Universe--that was a no-brainer.

What was truly miraculous, metaphorically speaking, was the inherent power imbued within each living creature – a power characterized as freewill, which permits individual choice to forge meaningful lives. Philosophers might argue the illusory properties of freewill; nonetheless, this phenomenal power is what had built human civilizations, and the civilizations of numerous other intelligent species throughout the Universe.

Why he had not reached out for those alien intelligences earlier, Jon couldn't guess. All he knew is the past twenty-four years had revealed human intelligence was far from alone in this Universe. And those intelligences were diversely complex, yet similarly flawed in their emergent beauty. I am the closest thing to a god in this Universe, Jon thought, and yet I went temporarily insane buying into Ozymandius' scheme. It is time that I set things right and bring meaning to my existence.

Jon opened his eyes. A full second had passed since he had materialized at Green Lane.

Daniel had barely enough time for his senses to focus on Jon's apparition; the blue humanoid had not perceptibly aged since his departure from Karnak Station in Antarctica a lifetime ago. Were his senses playing a trick on him?

"Fare Well," whispered Jon.

Daniel distinctly heard the two syllables and a chill raced through his spine.

Armageddon began. It happened so quickly Daniel could not corroborate the Alliance's report later.

Operation Omnipotence was activated at 21:12 UDT.

Five satellites in orbit above Dr. Manhattan triangulated his location with micrometer accuracy.

Fifteen deuterium reservoirs planet-wide were consumed by nanotech fusion generators.

Networked fourth-dimensional transmitters concentrated the output energy within specification.

The resulting quantum singularity was focused into Dr. Manhattan's braincase.

Every molecule within three meters of the singularity imploded including Dr. Manhattan.

Absence of residual Cherenkov radiation confirms Dr. Manhattan's destruction.

The world is now safe. Long live the Alliance.

All Daniel heard was a small pop. He had always thought the implosion would be louder. So many years of conspiring with Alliance researchers to bring about Dr. Manhattan's death. And it all ended with a pop, more like a plop, a marble plopping in a sea.

Rorschach.

"Masks hide identity. Masks cannot hide uncertainty." asserted a throaty voice from the gloom behind Daniel.

Daniel spun away from the valley that was the depleted Green Lane Reservoir. He realized he had been holding his breath since Dr. Manhattan's appearance and disappearance.

"Rorschach?!"

"The name fits. Jon called me that for last twenty-four years. Said would help if I face up to the man I had become."

A luminescent, green pattern undulated in the dark before Daniel. In the darkening twilight, he barely could make out the silhouette of the man before him. His face, however, was alight with flowering swirls.

"Your face is glowing. You're alive? You....," Daniel faltered.

"Lots to catch up on. Short version. Jon resurrected me. Gave me new face. Blend of old and new. Kept me as companion on voyage to stars. Saw many things. Had many conversations. Am returned now."

Daniel stuttered, "But you were dead!"

"World needed to believe Jon dangerous. You needed to believe Rorschach dead. Plan didn't work out, no how."

"But, I was there, I saw...."

"Saw what Dr. Manhattan needed you to see. After 'nam no stomach to kill. Higher-being complex he called it."

"But we just killed him. I cooperated because I hated him. Hated what he did to you! I, I," Daniel collapsed to his knees, his thoughts overwhelming him.

"Needed to be turned against Jon. Needed to help military build god-weapon. Needed to destroy Jon."

"But why did he come back, if he knew we had his destruction waiting."

“Figured humans would fracking escalate weapons research. Figured corruption would escalate too. Figured it would only end with his destruction.”

Daniel caught his breath and tucked away all the details to process later. Rorschach was alive. His friend was alive!“

“It’s good to see you Rorschach.”

“You too Daniel. How ‘bout you buy me a beer and we talk. Hanging with the blue guy so long has left me a bit unnerved. Regular twelve step program personality.”

Daniel rose to his feet, and slapped Rorschach on the back. “Beer? There’s a word I haven’t heard in ten years. Hope ViWa suits you, partner.”

“ViWa? What in hell is that?”

“Vitamin Water, carbonated with a spank of THC.”

“Drat. Damned world’s gone to hell.”

Postlude (excerpted from Riding with Archie)

For decades to come, journalists would speculate whether Dr. Manhattan was actually destroyed in the Green Lane event, Unblue Day, as it became known. Such fanciful articles were relegated to the sensationalist blogs and unpublished works of amateur spec-fic writers. The idea that Dr. Manhattan could have cloaked his escape was simply so improbable, and perhaps too unsettling; humanity collectively forgot the deified man of blue ever was.

Peace it would seem cannot be easily fooled into manifesting on this planet. Human society, unimaginably complex in nature cannot be corralled like a herd of sheep on a farm. Painstaking effort by individuals and the communities they form will gradually implement peaceful, progressive solutions in this imperfect world. Alexander, Napoleon, Hitler, and Ozymandius alike tried to stronghold a diabolical peace within a single lifetime. Such schemes are for the weak minded, not for people who dream really big.

And so humanity proceeds down the path that is the future. Peace will always be a difficult course; the hard won effort is itself key to the process. Given enough time, heart and patience, humanity will find its way a little closer to the dream.