

The Ones Who Came Back to Omelas

A Sequel to The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas

Magical Comrade Molotov Catgirl

September 2, 2020

I was wrong. They came back. One by one, at first, then in groups of dozens and hundreds. The look on their faces is as incomprehensible to me and you as the city of Omelas itself, for it is not rage or despair that is written in the knot of their brows or the steel glint of their eyes. Perhaps the narrow-minded will call it hatred, but that is merely an inadequacy of the language, for the cold contempt of an exploiter is not anything like the burning flame in the hearts of the exploited, nor is it anything similar to the raw diamond of determination that clenches the fists of these people, the ones who came back to Omelas. For despite their obsession with pain and evil, the artists had always been content with manufacturing their own agony and despair, and had never once looked true suffering and wickedness in the eyes.

So here they come, the ones who came back to Omelas. They come like a hurricane, with firebombs in their hands and firelight in their eyes, tearing down the perfect walls and beautiful houses of Omelas, showering its joyful and thoughtful people with flame. “Until there’s justice for all innocents”, said one of them, “There will be no peace for the complacent.” So on and on they go, the ones who came back to Omelas, with their bombs and their guns and their cries, bringing guilt and shame and fear to the city at last. They kill without hesitation and destroy without discrimination, for truly it is no longer justice they seek, since they know there will be no justice to be had, none except for the silence of the grave.

Do you believe me now, about the city of Omelas? It is not so different from your city, I say; maybe it’s nicer and cleaner, the people more loving and enlightened, but in the end it is not so different. There is a child in your city too; have you ever gone to visit it, see it being caged in darkness, forced to wallow in its own filth? If not, then you will never understand them, the ones who came back to Omelas. They had all walked away, in rage or despair or shame, and most of them were never seen again. But it is not any emotion we can recognize that brought them back, it is not rage or shame or even guilt. Surely as the night cannot comprehend the light of the day, nor can we ever understand the light in their eyes.

How many of them there are, the ones who walked away from your city? And how many of them there are, the ones who came back? Believe me, they will; maybe not yet, not at first, but they will come back. One by one, at first, then in groups of dozens and hundreds. They will come back with firebombs in their hands and firelight in their eyes, shouting: “Until there’s justice for all innocents, there will be no peace for the complacent.” For the city of Omelas is truly as banal

as any other, both in its radiant splendor and its corrupted heartbeat. They will come back to your city too, the ones who walk away from Omelas; they will bring guilt and shame and fear, all of which you know you richly deserved.

Do you believe me now, about the ones who came back to Omelas?

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