

Omelian Resolution

Based on the Short Story  
"The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"  
By Ursula K. Le Guin

INT. PUBLIC BUILDING MAIN HALL - NIGHT

All is quiet. The grand hall, supremely engineered with masterfully intricate architecture, is empty and ominous.

Then a CHILD'S CRY, faint and lonely, echoes from somewhere within the building.

INT. ESCOLHA COTTAGE - DAY

AMALI ESCOLHA (30s) washes vegetables in the kitchen. SHENNA ESCOLHA (15) enters, having just woken up.

AMALI

Good morning, sweetheart. Ready for the Festival?

SHENNA

I was so excited last night I could hardly sleep. Where's Jayce?

AMALI

In the stable getting Galvin ready for the race.

SHENNA

Do you think they can win?

AMALI

Of course I do. He's been training with that horse since we got him.

SHENNA

I'll go see if he needs any help.

INT. ESCOLHA STABLE - DAY

JAYCE ESCOLHA (15), twin to Shenna, brushes Galvin's back and neck while he speaks softly to the animal. Galvin reacts when Shenna enters the stable, alerting Jayce to her presence.

SHENNA

How is Galvin feeling this morning?

JAYCE

Strong and smart. I have a good feeling about today.

SHENNA

Well, Galvin won't let you down,  
will you boy?

She pets his neck.

JAYCE

I'm going to go over to the course  
and walk it with him before the  
race. I'll see you there?

SHENNA

I'll be in front cheering you on.

Galvin neighs.

SHENNA (cont'd)

OK, cheering you BOTH on.

EXT. OMELAS CITY STREET - DAY

The Festival of Summer procession, involving thousands of people, leads slowly along the city streets. The Omelians dance, sing and laugh as they make their way towards the course.

EXT. RACE COURSE - DAY

Youth line up on horseback at the starting line.

Jayce sits tall and waves when he sees Shenna in the crowd.

The race begins and the young men race along laughing and yelling at each other playfully while trying to get in position for the final stretch.

INT. PUBLIC BUILDING MAIN HALL - DAY

The grand halls are still empty and the cheering from the crowd echoes in the halls.

The CHILD'S CRY is heard again, followed by inaudible pleading words coming from the basement.

EXT. RACE COURSE - DAY

Jayce and another young man race nose-to-nose as the crowd continues cheering for the participants. Jayce edges out the other competitor just before the finish line.

The crowd erupts, including the other competitors. Jayce is awarded a floral crown and hugs and kisses from everyone.

INT. ESCOLHA COTTAGE - NIGHT

Amali, Jayce and Shenna sit around a small table enjoying food and drink. Jayce still wears his crown.

JAYCE

I just knew Galvin could do it. We trained so hard.

AMALI

Sometimes I think you spend more time with him than with us.

JAYCE

It doesn't mean I love him more, though. I love you two more than I can say.

SHENNA

Aww...we love you too, Jayce. And we're so proud of your accomplishment. It must feel so good!

Jayce nods as he drinks from his cup.

AMALI

Since there is so much love of life going around, I want to take you two somewhere tomorrow. I think you are both ready.

JAYCE

Ready for what?

AMALI

You were both born and raised here in Omelas. Life is very good here, but there are places where life is not so good. There is opposition in the world and there must be a price paid for all good things. Do you know what that means?

The twins look at each other and shake their heads.

AMALI (cont'd)

If there is good then there must be the same amount of evil. Evil is when something happens that does not make you happy.

JAYCE

Like getting hurt?

AMALI

Yes, like getting hurt by something... or someone.

SHENNA

But why would anyone want to hurt us?

AMALI

Not us, not here. But the price must be paid for our wonderful lives here. That is where I want to take you. To show you how the price is being paid.

They both looked concerned and confused.

AMALI (cont'd)

We'll talk about it tomorrow. I just want you to know the truth. Don't stay up too late.

She kisses them both and heads off to bed. The twins are left to ponder their mother's words alone.

SHENNA

Do you think anyone will be hurt where we're going tomorrow?

JAYCE

I don't know, Shenna. But mother would never let anyone hurt us, would she? Of course not. It must just be part of growing up.

Shenna still looks worried. Jayce removes his crown and places it on her head.

JAYCE (cont'd)

Don't worry, I won't let anyone hurt you either.

INT. PUBLIC BUILDING HALL - DAY

There are people walking about, conducting business as usual in the building. Amali enters followed by her children and they walk up to the RECEPTIONIST.

AMALI

Good morning.

RECEPTIONIST

Hey, the winner of the big race!  
Congratulations, young man!

JAYCE

Thank you.

AMALI

(to the receptionist)

We need to see Machus.

The receptionist's expression changes immediately from cheerful to somber. She gestures for them to wait and she disappears around the corner. When she reappears she is followed by a man, MACHUS, with a key ring attached to his belt.

RECEPTIONIST

Machus will show you to the  
basement.

They follow Machus out of the hall.

INT. PUBLIC BUILDING HALLWAY

The hallway is dimly lit. The Escolha family follows Machus down the hallway.

MACHUS

(to Amali)

This is their first visit?

Amali nods and Machus nods in return. He attempts to bring some cheer into the hallway, which is getting darker.

SHENNA

Why is it so dark back here?

MACHUS

To let your eyes adjust, the  
basement is quite dark.

(to Jayce)

So, the winner of the big race?  
That is quite an accomplishment.

JAYCE

Thank you, I let Galvin do most of the work.

MACHUS

Yes, the horses of Omelas are almost as hard-working and wonderful as the people. And it will stay that way.

They reach a door and Machus brings a key to it.

MACHUS (cont'd)

And you're about to see why.

Machus opens the door and stands back for the twins to enter. After a reassuring nod from their mother, they enter.

INT. PUBLIC BUILDING BASEMENT

There are stairs leading down to the basement, which is barely bigger than a closet. Some dirty mops and a bucket sit in the near corner. In the far corner sits a child, whimpering. It is naked and malnourished. It is so dirty that it's gender and age are indistinguishable. It cowers from the small amount of light let in through the open door.

The twins stop, appalled at the revolting site and smell.

MACHUS

The misery of this child is what makes our lives possible. It is what allows the nobility of our architecture, the poignancy of our music, the profundity of our science. If it were not here, Omelas would cease to exist as you and I know it.

Shenna hands fly to her stomach and mouth and she retches on the floor. She races back up the stairs, followed by Jayce.

Machus and Amali both take one last disgusted look and exit. Just as Machus is about to close the door the child begs quietly.

CHILD

I will be good. Please let me out.  
I will be good.

Machus ignores its plea and locks the door.

EXT. PUBLIC BUILDING - DAY

Shenna comes running out of the building. She looks around, but the brillinace that once surrounded her in the city seems somehow tainted with her newfound knowledge.

Jayce stumbles out, but regains his composure when he sees Shenna. He grabs her by the arms, trying to keep her calm.

JAYCE

Let's go home, Shenna. Let's go home.

Amali emerges and walks down the street, smiling at passers-by who all seem to know what just happened as they, too, have seen the child. They smile back and nod supportively as they go about their business happy and free.

INT. ESCOLHA COTTAGE - DAY

The twins enter their home and Shenna falls into a chair at the table, buries her head in her arms and bursts into tears she had been saving until she got home.

Jayce sits next to her, forlorn and exhausted.

Amali enters and sits down at the table.

AMALI

Now you understand what opposition means. And as long as things stay the way they are nobody will ever hurt you.

SHENNA

What about that child, mother? Does it know anything but hurt? Why don't they let it go home?

AMALI

Sweetheart, I hate that the child must suffer too. But would you throw away the happiness of thousands for the chance of the happiness of one? That would destroy our lives as well as the rest of Omelas.

JAYCE

Who keeps it there? I mean, who says it has to stay there?

AMALI

It's just understood that that is the way things are. I was not born here in Omelas like you two. I have seen the lives of the people in the outside world. They have kings and rulers who oppress and subjugate them. Their lives are full of weakness and fear, anger and guilt. I do not wish to live that life again. You must learn to accept the fact that your lives are superior to theirs because of what you have seen today. Once you learn to accept that your lives will return to being full of joy and happiness.

Jayce and Shenna both look defeated. How can they be happy knowing what they know now?

AMALI (cont'd)

I am going to take the vegetables to the Farmer's Market. Why don't you two just stay here and talk about it today. I'll see you tonight.

Amali grabs a basket filled with vegetables and leaves.

SHENNA

Can you believe this, Jayce?

JAYCE

You heard mother, Shenna. We have to believe it, otherwise our lives will be the way she described the outside world to be.

SHENNA

It can't be so bad, can it?

JAYCE

I don't know, Shenna. Maybe it is, maybe it isn't.

SHENNA

We both know how to grow vegetables. We know how to cook and clean. Maybe we could take care of ourselves.

JAYCE

What are you saying?

SHENNA

I think we should free that poor child. Take it out of Omelas.

JAYCE

Don't you think that if we did that we wouldn't be allowed to come back?

SHENNA

That's the point, Jayce. I don't know if I want to come back.

JAYCE

What about mother?

SHENNA

She would come with us when she sees what we have done. She loves us, Jayce. She will support us.

JAYCE

But you heard what she said about life outside. She doesn't want to go back to it.

SHENNA

She can use the knowledge she has gained here to build another Omelas. Another place, a better place. One where nobody will be harmed. Not one child.

JAYCE

(considers)

She did say that she doesn't like that the child must suffer. Maybe she would help us build another place like Omelas.

SHENNA

I know she would, but we cannot ask her to help us free the child. She would not agree. We can only show her how we freed the child after we have done it, so she can see that we are smart enough and strong enough to build a new Omelas.

They sit in silence for a moment, considering the magnitude of this decision.

JAYCE

How are we going to do it?

Shenna smiles that her brother is on her side.

SHENNA

It shouldn't be difficult, I don't think anyone is there all night. We'll go tonight. This is going to be the biggest accomplishment of our lives, Jayce. Life changing. Much bigger than the horse race.

JAYCE

I sure am glad we have Galvin to help us. He's always been such a faithful companion to me.

Shenna can see that Jayce is already thinking of missing home, so she steps in.

SHENNA

Just as you have been to me.

EXT. PUBLIC BUILDING - NIGHT

Jayce and Shenna ride quietly on Galvin's back. Jayce has a backpack on. The horse is uneasy near the Public Building.

JAYCE

Quiet, quiet Galvin. We mustn't let anyone know we are here.

They dismount and walk up to the entry of the building. The large doors are open, no lock is even visible. They enter.

INT. PUBLIC BUILDING - NIGHT

The hall is empty and quiet.

SHENNA

Wow, this is the quietest place I've ever been in.

Suddenly the faint CRYING of the child comes from the basement. Jayce pulls two candles from his pack, lights them and gives one to Shenna.

They make their way to the back of the building and down the hallway while the crying grows steadily more audible.

They reach the door and the crying stops. Jayce hands his candle to Shenna and reaches in his pack to find the hand tools he brought to try and break the lock.

MACHUS

It's easier to use the keys.

The twins both jump, shocked to hear anyone else in the hallway as they thought they were alone.

JAYCE

How did you know we were here?

MACHUS

I have a room on the other side of the building. My charge is to guard the child.

JAYCE

Then you're here to stop us?

MACHUS

No. Omelas has no enforcement, you know this. Enforcement causes people to distrust one another. This city was built on trust.

SHENNA

If you trust everyone then why do you watch the door to the basement?

MACHUS

As I said, it is my charge. If you want the keys to open the door and, I assume, free the child, all you have to do is take them.

Machus holds out the keys and Jayce hesitantly takes them.

MACHUS (cont'd)

But let me ask you if that is really what you want to do. You don't know what life outside is like. It is full of pain and sorrow.

AMALI

They know.

All three turn, startled to hear yet another voice in the hallway.

AMALI (cont'd)

When I saw that you had both left I  
knew you would be here. You're not  
the first ones to try this.

The twins both hang their heads, ashamed.

AMALI (cont'd)

If you wish to do this the choice  
is yours. You will not be hindered.  
But if you do you will have to  
leave Omelas and you will never be  
able to return.

(beat)

And you will go alone.

They are stunned that their mother would say such a thing.  
To show her resolution she turns and exits back down the  
hallway.

They both watch her leave. They look at each other and know  
what must be done.

JAYCE

We can't do this, Shenna. Not  
without mother.

SHENNA

Maybe I was wrong. Life is good  
here in Omelas.

Jayce hands the keys back to Machus and puts his arm around  
his sister. They head back out the hallway followed by  
Machus.

The faint CRYING returns.

CHILD

I will be good. Please let me out.  
I will be good.

THE END