

ZEYTINBURNU MONOLOGUES

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FADE IN:



EXT. ZEYTINBURNU - HUZUR APARTMENTS - AT NIGHT

A 5-storey apartment building collapsed 15 minutes after a cracking sound was heard. 2 dead, 28 injured. An ambulance comes tearing down

the road, siren blaring. It's been six hours since the building collapsed. The rescue operation is still going on.

MAN 1

The doorbell rang. I said to my wife, grab the kids and get out.

MAN 2

When it happened, I was working the night shift at the textile workshop. I heard cracking and realised that the building was falling down. I tried to yell and ring the doorbells. Some people looked out of their windows, panicking. Then the building collapsed.

MAN 3

We asked the bank for a loan. The bank wanted a certificate showing the structural state of the building. We got some papers from the city council and we bought the house for 60,000 lira. We'd been had. It never occurred to me that it might collapse! How can the city council give the papers if the building is damaged? Don't they care in the least about human life?

CUT TO:



EXT. ZEYTINBURNU STREETS - DAYTIME

A residential area with a variety of personalized facades... Modifications to some balconies, attics, and basements can be seen. Many buildings show signs of decay; many apartments are sealed and have been evacuated by the public authorities. Cracks run between many apartments. Most of the buildings zigzag the streets and it looks as if the town was built without a plan. A man, HOUSEHOLDER 1, stands on a sidewalk. Basically he is doing nothing but standing there. He looks to be in his 40's. He is wearing a sweat suit.

HOUSEHOLDER 1

All this area was a shantytown. There were no normal buildings here anyway. Not a single one had building permission! It wasn't right. It's the same today. None of them have building permission. The whole lot is illegal: all

built with sand. Who says it's legal, for God's sake? It's permission for this and permission for that. Don't mean anything. Permits can be bought. Hand over the cash - get the permit. What does 'authorized' mean? It's a piece of piss to get authorized, innit? This is the law of the land, mate; this is government policy.

He starts walking, pointing out the buildings that remain on the left-hand side. Shanty houses squeezed between apartment buildings can be seen clearly.

HOUSEHOLDER 1

It was flat here; nothing here, just land and more land: nothing but soil. It's us who's transformed it. We're the ones to blame, before anyone else. We came here in '62, rented a shanty house, five or six of us in a shanty house.

He shows the space right in front of him: a big empty lot, full of pebbles and dust. A couple of trucks are parked on it.

HOUSEHOLDER 1

This is where that apartment block collapsed. The city demolished two more buildings nearby. It's a month since they cleared the wreckage. Now they're using it as a parking lot. The families are to be given apartments in the social housing blocks, at low cost they say, in Halkalı. How low can it be?

He keeps walking and pointing at things. Buildings are in visible disrepair. Noise can be heard from nearby new construction sites.

HOUSEHOLDER 1

Then we came here and built a shanty on our own. We turned it into a multi-storey building on the sly, you know: all illegal. We did a load more! We never asked for no permits. Nobody did. Them permits are provisional anyway. If you've got one, you have to renew it every six months. Why? Because you've got to keep them shops open and make some cash. You can't run a shop without papers. So, there you have it - informal permits and temporary housing.

He shows the basement floors of the apartment buildings... Windows are barely visible just above road level.

HOUSEHOLDER 1

Until now they let us keep them basement floors and run them as workshops. People built them basements and now they're all being closed down. Why did they allow it in the first place if they were going to ban it? What's the point of that?

CUT TO:



EXT. A CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAYTIME

In front of the site, a man, CONTRACTOR 1, stands in his sweat suit. He plays with the bunch of keys in his hand. The building behind him is crudely made. The workers are on the scaffold, painting the facade white.

CONTRACTOR 1

This construction has a building permit.

He shows the surrounding buildings: rambling houses with one or two storeys and multi-storey apartment blocks, all of them shabby.

CONTRACTOR 1

The old buildings don't comply with the zoning plans. They'll be demolished sooner or later. They'll not last much longer: five to ten years, maybe.

He mostly uses body language to give details of the new construction.

CONTRACTOR 1

I bought this place for next to nothing. I offered the shanty owner a flat in the block in return for use of the land. It's going to be a five-storey building. All the flats are sold already! This is standard. New sites have buyers before construction even starts.

He plays with the keys in his hand.

CONTRACTOR 1

We are being inspected thoroughly. Every building has standards. They are earthquake-resistant. Universities analyze the concrete that we use for each and every

flat. Reconstruction permits are decided on, things are written within the plan. You go to the city council and get the answers. There, everything is sorted out on computers. You see the zoning sheets. You cannot change anything. The dodgy cash goes to the big guys in the business, not to me! If a guy buys up big areas, he can change the construction plan. Do you know what I mean?

He lowers his voice

CONTRACTOR 1

So and so bought up some land. Did you read the papers today? Now he has to pay a fine of 3 billion lira. It's only the big bosses around here who make money doing nothing.

He rubs his hands

CONTRACTOR 1

They strike it rich in-between making their bids. We don't even get a look in with the tenders.

He scratches his nose

CONTRACTOR 1

Where are you from? I'm from Kastamonu.

CUT TO:



EXT. EVRENSEL APT- AT NIGHT

A 12-year-old building cracked and broke away from the one next to it. The inhabitants got out of the building. All the surrounding buildings have been evacuated. The city council has sealed off the building to prevent unauthorized entry.

EXT. ZEYTINBURNU STREETS - DAYTIME

Sounds of destruction... A crowd gathers around a five-storey building. The road is blocked to allow city council vehicles to pass. We see wrecked buildings. Teams are getting ready to demolish the other building.

EXT. EVRENSEL APT- DAYTIME

A group of men are speaking their minds. CONTRACTOR 2 is an old man in a grey suit, white-haired and pot-bellied. THE OTHER GUY is skinny. THE INHABITANT is a middle-aged man.

THE INHABITANT moves towards the camera.

THE INHABITANT

Nobody asks me what the hell I'm going to do! Where am I staying? Nowhere. How should I know where to stay? The city council asks me to get hold of a report on the pillars in the building, an analysis of the concrete, blah blah blah... "Go to the inspection" they say, "Take samples. Bring them back!" They expect me to do everything! What the hell do I know about inspections!

He points at himself

THE INHABITANT

It's not right. As if something like this happens every day! I'm losing it. I am on the verge of a mental breakdown. My wife and children are at my mother-in-law's and I'm left running in-between. Nothing's been decided about the building. Will it be demolished? Somebody please tell me, are we moving back in or not? What's with the government? What's with the city council? There's no one there. We just keep on waiting. We can do sod all. It wouldn't change a thing if I had the contract. In either case, if they demolish it, you move out.

CONTRACTOR 2 interrupts, attempting to take some initiative

CONTRACTOR 2

There is nothing wrong with this building. It was built in 1995 and has a certificate. Look at the girders. There are no cracks, no fractures. Nothing's wrong. You know what's wrong? Other buildings invalidated the permit by adding storeys.

He shows the evacuated building and the one next to it

CONTRACTOR 2

Do you see the crack in between these two buildings? Well now, do you see that other building's two extra storeys? Someone built extra storeys; and the city council turned a blind eye to it. You can guess why!

He rolls his eyes and shows his pocket so as not to have to say the word 'bribe'

CONTRACTOR 2

If a four-storey building turns into a seven-storey one, the ground loosens. You can only carry 50 kg. If I load 100 kg on you, sooner or later you'll collapse. Citizens, the city council and the ground are to blame. There you go.

All of a sudden, he becomes furious

CONTRACTOR 2

What if those two storeys hit my building in a small earthquake?

THE OTHER GUY interrupts; he feels the need to say something

THE OTHER GUY

It has two extra storeys.

CONTRACTOR 2

Yes! Spot on! How will I know if this building will have any impact on mine in an earthquake? If mine goes down, the other one goes straight down with it.

THE OTHER GUY

If they knock this one over, the other will collapse for sure. No chance!

CONTRACTOR 2

We are lucky that nobody died. Remember the earthquake in Golcuk? The military club, the mess, you know, collapsed there. Do you remember that huge building?

He gets pretty hysterical about it. He mumbles on about the army

CONTRACTOR 2

This is only a small building. What does it matter if it is wrecked?

He moves towards another building and points out a 'sealed off' sign

CONTRACTOR 2

Look at this one. It is a new house but the doors are sealed. People break the law and get

in. Fair enough, though. What would you do if you had nowhere to stay? You've got to take the risk.

He shows the ground under his feet. It is all dust. The area measures around 40 square metres

CONTRACTOR 2

A shanty house was demolished a couple of weeks ago, right here. It was in the way of one of the streets on the plan. Now, the owners are sleeping in nearby parks.

THE OTHER GUY

Look at that building. It's also been sealed off.

CONTRACTOR 2 gets really angry. He walks towards THE OTHER GUY.

CONTRACTOR 2

Oi, mate! Stop butting in! Mind your own business, will you? What if you make a false statement? Stop blowing your mouth off!

THE OTHER GUY

What did I say?

CONTRACTOR 2

Look, mate! Leave us alone.

THE OTHER GUY

All right, guv! Take it easy.

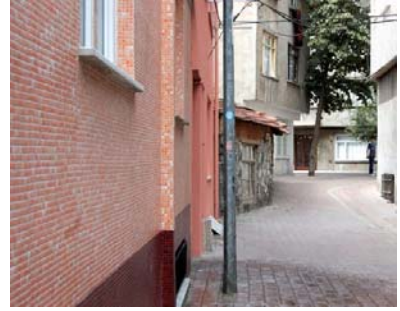
CONTRACTOR 2

To be fair, the mayor does work hard. This is not the only faulty building; there are thousands like this one. If there were only one or two, the mayor would help. He would renovate our building and give it back. But as I say, there are thousands.

THE SIGN READS

This building is structurally a danger to health and safety. It has been evacuated in accordance with the Construction Law, code nr. 3194, and sealed off to prevent unauthorized entry.

CUT TO:



EXT. SHANTY HOUSE- DAYTIME

THE SHANTY OWNER 1 sits on the patio of his house. THE SHANTY OWNER 2 paces up and down the street. He wears sweatpants and a shirt. His shirt is unbuttoned. His hair is white.

THE SHANTY OWNER 1

We've been here for 40 years. Many landowners choose to negotiate with contractors to erect buildings on their property. We get offers as well, but they're just never feasible. They don't pay much. The contractor always wants the bigger slice. Think about it, he's going to build 9 storeys here, and 3 additional storeys illegally. He will let the first floor as shops, which will mean direct profits for him. Yet, when it comes to me, he will give me only one apartment. What use to me is one apartment! I already own a 129 square metre place here.

SHANTY OWNER 2 interrupts; he seems troubled

SHANTY OWNER 2

The city council has no right to start demolishing stuff. Where do they get that right? We've been living here for years and years. We were born here. We grew up here. We paid our taxes. Recently I went to the Housing Department, you know, to discuss this issue. The officer said, "It will be demolished". I said, "Sir, there are shanty houses that are not being demolished". I gave him some examples: some near the barracks, some near the baker's. Those houses don't even have contracts. The Housing Department said, "If a house is in the way, it goes". But the city council cannot knock down houses if citizens put up a fight. At least they haven't managed to do so yet. And why is that?

He is willing to tell more

SHANTY OWNER 2

We've been in court for nine years trying to get the title deed. Recently we won the case. Now they are expecting a letter from Ankara.

When it arrives, the Assessment Committee will decide on the price and will tell us, "It costs so and so much. Come and get your deed". We are trying to negotiate with the builders as well. They too have expenses. And yet, there are six of us sharing the title deed. The offers won't do. We're in a bit of a dilemma. Otherwise, say I had just a bit of cash in my pocket; do you think I would stay? I'd leave right now: for my hometown, where our fathers come from. Of course I'd go. Yes, we were born here and we grew up here. But this kind of life is no good for us anymore.

He points around. There are apartment blocks around his shanty house. He gets emotional.

SHANTY OWNER 2

No more neighbourliness. No more hellos, no more greetings. Back in the old days, we had stuff to share during Ramadan or on other days. Back then there was one household in one place and now, with all those different floors, there are more than five or six households. Families with lots of kids... We are not used to it. There are people from everywhere here nowadays.

He starts to tell his own story.

SHANTY OWNER 2

My father migrated from Çankırı in 1947. First of all he moved into a shared bed-sit. You know, those dens for bachelors: lots of them packed into a single room. Well, the story is, on one Night of Qadr, he knocks on the door and can't get in. He prays and begs, "My Lord, give me a place; as small as a chicken coop even, but let it be mine". Fifteen days later he hears about this place where people are enclosing land. That's how this district began to form. A lot of people migrated to Istanbul back then, as they do today. Zeytinburnu was the first area to be squatted, you know. At the time, no one knew that the land belonged to the national treasury or an endowed charity. We found that out when deeds were allocated, of course. They told us later, that the owner lived in France. So what? What do the English or the French matter after 60 years' absence? And so here we are. We are the landlords. And yet we are thinking of selling. Mama's resisting giving up her share, but how long is she going to persist?

He shows the multi-storey building behind the shanty house

SHANTY OWNER 2

The contractor on that building was going to construct two buildings instead of one. But Mama wouldn't give them her share. Back then every shareholder was going to get one flat each. Today, the guy gives only two flats for the six of us. What's all that about eh? What's all that about?

He points at the ground. The asphalt is cracked.

SHANTY OWNER 2

They came and surveyed the ground and the neighbouring buildings. They say 60% of buildings are at risk of collapsing. A building collapsed in Yenidogan Quarter, another in Çırpıcı... They passed the Urban Redevelopment Law. So and so said that the money comes from Europe. They said that Zeytinburnu was chosen to be the pilot project. Who chose it? I don't know. We were told that the district will be transformed, will gradually be given to the contractors and turned into a place like Atakoy. Buildings on the skyline there are dozens of storeys high! Yet the builders keep buying from the landowners. There are new apartment blocks and non-stop construction. If the district is to be completely transformed, why do these people keep buying land? Why do the authorities allow it? I have no idea. Nobody has. If it is true that the area is going through urban transformation, the council should call the citizens and say, "Where is your land? What is your share? Give us the land, we'll sort it out". Don't you reckon?

CUT TO:



EXT. STREETS OF ZEYTINBURNU

HOUSEHOLDER 1 walks past the billboards.

THE BILLBOARD

A computer-generated impression of the new apartment blocks, on which is written in bold type: "Turkey's first Earthquake Transformation Zone Project is starting out in Zeytinburnu"

HOUSEHOLDER 1 grimaces when he sees the billboards.

HOUSEHOLDER 1

They passed the Urban Redevelopment Law. There is no law like that in the world. 'Emergency expropriation': that's the term they use. They pick on Zeytinburnu and blame it on the earthquake. D'you know what I wanna say to them? I wanna say, c'mon then, mate, c'mon, pull down my house if you can! They say they'll give me an apartment in Ikitelli. Ha! Do they think I wanna move there? A building in Ikitelli is worth sod all compared to mine. Get this: this is Zeytinburnu. This is the heart of Istanbul, the land of milk and honey! What other place has such facilities? You can't show me a single one 'cos there is none. Another earthquake and half of these buildings will be gone. And good riddance to them! That's what I'm waiting for.

He wants to explain himself

HOUSEHOLDER 1

Look at them buildings! They are all on top of each other. You can't breathe here.

CUT TO:



EXT. THE STREETS- DAYTIME

The leaning facades of the buildings give no clue as to where the streets end. A shanty house is squeezed between apartment blocks on the left. The buildings have shapeless, un-plastered, un-painted sides. One building consists solely of cement blocks. People wave from the windows. A forlorn yard can be made out behind the nearest building. The shanty house looks so very tiny. THE WOMAN comes with bags in her hand.

THE WOMAN

Gal, let me tell you what happened with the earthquake. I swear to God, the walls in these buildings were,

She puts down her bags and tries to illustrate the state of the walls with her arms. She leans on a dusty car, parked on the sidewalk.

THE WOMAN

... caved in like this. Everything was coming apart at the seams. You know what the owners did? They just dabbed a bit of plaster on the walls.

She keeps moving her hands in a crazy fashion, describing the gaps

THE WOMAN

This building and that were detached from one another, like this. This building and that building... All the buildings were in pieces, with pieces falling off here and there.

She illustrates this with her hands

THE WOMAN

The gap between them was this wide.

She points at herself

THE WOMAN

I'm not a landlady myself. Do you know what the landlords did? They dabbed a tad of plaster on these houses, jazzed them up a bit, and put them up for sale. Then people bought them. They jazzed up the houses. Even the tenants bought them. Okay, if you're the landlord, you just sell and get out. What about the others? Some guy bought it, knowingly or unknowingly. You put him through a bottleneck. You're digging the guy an early grave.

She drives her hands forward

THE WOMAN

You know what the guy says? Let's say the Easterners- pardon me for saying Easterners, they are people just like us, innit? They come in groups of 30, 20 or 15 people and settle in the same house, same flat, whatever. They have no other choice, innit?

She claps her hands together.

THE WOMAN

And the landlord has to have them, what else can he do? Do you know how much they pay for them dingy holes? For a den not worth a lira more than 100 or 200, they pay 600 or 700 lira. Why? He is human, too, you know. Don't you have a heart? Is that fair now? I swear to

God, there is no humanity left and if you die of hunger, you die and nobody cares. I know this for a fact. God said, "He who sleeps on a full stomach while his neighbour goes hungry is not one of us".

She shows her shanty house

THE WOMAN

I rent this place. I swear to God, I rent the place. It's 250 a month, but I cannot pay. I have a heart disease, plus a goitre and hernia on my back. The city council gives me my bread. I go and get 4 loaves everyday. May Allah be pleased and Allah bless them a thousand times ... Our landlord helps us. The head officials don't. My son does not work. I have a daughter who's asthmatic and stays home. Go and see for yourself. I swear to God, no human could live where I live. But I have to. What else can I do? If there's an earthquake, I'm stuck. That building will collapse on us, this one will fall on us, and that will fall on us. We'll be stuck in the middle and we will die.

She looks up to the sky and raises her arms

THE WOMAN

One minute we're here and the next... crash! Something falls out of the sky. We are dead again. You can't stop fate. We are in the hands of God and where else can we go? We cannot go anywhere.

She points far away, trying to identify some buildings

THE WOMAN

They say that building over there might have an occupancy permit. I don't know. There's a yellow building there; maybe that won't collapse. You know why? 'Cos its base is all right. Its foundations are solid.

She point at the ground. It is cobble-stoned

THE WOMAN

All these roads and stuff, the city council built them very recently. Nearly 3 months ago... I swear to God, I've been living here for 30 years and in 30 years I've seen no public improvements. The dirty water used to seep in through my doorway and I'd cry out to the officers "I don't want a house, just build a drain there". All they said was "Vote for us, we'll get it done". We vote and we vote

again but nothing changes. That's it. Our lives are worth nothing.

CUT TO:



EXT. ZEYTINBURNU STREETS - DAYTIME

SHANTY OWNER 2 walks around the streets, speaking. He points at another shanty on his path. In its window hangs a sign, scribbled in pencil on white paper: 'COMPLETE, WITH DEEDS. 375 square metre. For Sale, Tel: 0537 841 53 68'. He walks towards a house that juts out into the street. As he walks, he points out how far the façade juts out. He compares it to the neighbouring building. It is clear that more than half of the house actually lies on the street.

SHANTY OWNER 2

If you draw the line right from here and tear the house down, all that is left for another construction is a square metre patch. I mean, come on now: who will pay for a square metre patch?

He points at the street he is standing on. It seems out of proportion to the shabby buildings that zigzag along its margins. It is a wide road. The paving stones look sharp in the shadow of the midday sun. The kids are playing soccer. It is noisy so he speaks more loudly.

SHANTY OWNER 2

What is the city council going to do here? Are they going to land planes? Why do they need so much space on a side street, I don't get it?

He continues walking. He keeps pointing out buildings as he walks. He arrives in front of a house. He has to take a turn. The right side is sloped. The area is reminiscent of a labyrinth.

SHANTY OWNER 2

Look at the ledge on that apartment building; it's obviously blocking the road. But someone built it anyway. The city can't do a thing once it's built.

He gets angry about it and speaks up again.

SHANTY OWNER 2

If we had done that too, back in those days, the city wouldn't be able to do a thing about ours either! Of course! They say, "No, we will tear it down". I've only seen that happen once, right here: they chopped some bits off and that was that. I don't know whether the owner did it or the city. Some part of the front facade was chopped off. They said it was using up public space. What's that supposed to mean? That it had to look more like the building next to it? It's ridiculous to chop bits off a facade, innit?

After walking 100 metres he arrives in a small green area. There are benches surrounded by stone tiles. He points at an asphalted space some 3 or 4 metres in length, immediately behind the stone tiles

SHANTY OWNER 2

Someone had a place there. There were disputes over it. The city acquired that 3 square metres by order of the court and included it in this lawn. Then the guy made an appeal and he won. He had a container brought here; he came and took his space. He wanted to run it as a public toilet or something like that.

He points at the dug up asphalt

SHANTY OWNER 2

You can see where the drainage pipes are. That piece of land was his property. Then the guy disappeared. The city brought charges again; the owner did the same thing in return. They kept on suing one another... I've no idea whether they're still fighting in court or not. But the pipes are right in the middle of the street.

He keeps on walking. He then stops before a 100 m long street. Buildings on both sides of the street have been built on ill-defined lots and have crooked facades.

SHANTY OWNER 2 points at them

SHANTY OWNER 2

For God's sake, tell me, where else in the world can you find roads that have been mapped like this?

He gets pissed off and moves towards the camera

SHANTY OWNER 2

When it's us, they say, "You're going to tear it down". We ask them why in the hell they didn't tear down that building over there. They tell us "That's in court". "Then why

don't you take my case to court too", I say, "if that's how it works? If you can win the lot, win ours too!" He says, "We only do the demolition". They are so fond of destruction; they say, "We will take care of the costs". I ask myself sometimes, am I a fifth class citizen? If someone has the deeds for his place, how is that even possible? If you destroy my place, then you will have to do the same with the next place. The guy has a building right over there; he can't get permission to inhabit it, he can't go in. He can't get electricity and water hooked up. Things are completely messed up. If you don't know how this scam operates, you don't get permission of course; but if you do, you get all you want. You go and figure it out.