

Küba
a project by Kutluğ Ataman

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Extra City

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Küba

Küba is a project by the Turkish video artist Kutluğ Ataman. On 40 old television sets stacked up in an old harbour warehouse, an equal number of people tell their stories about a unique society in the slums of Istanbul. All sorts of people live in Küba: criminals, drug addicts, teenage delinquents, religious extremists and the poorest of the poor rub shoulders with one another there. Nobody is able to tell us where Küba is, precisely, or how it got its name. Some think that it is on the south side of Istanbul, others situate Küba near the airport. What is certain is that sometimes life can be pretty hard in Küba.

Ataman went in search of the origin and actuality of Küba, letting forty residents speak at length. The majority of those interviewed leave a lasting impression with their arresting stories of sometimes tragic, sometimes bitter events. Does Küba provide us with a picture of shared adversity, freedom and collectivity? Or is the language of violence the connecting factor in this imaginary enclave? Ataman leaves it up to us to decide.

With *Küba* Ataman seeks to fathom the boundaries – both geographic and mental – of an urban area. In the background *Küba* also goes in search of the relation between a place and individual and social desires or anxieties. How do people see themselves functioning in an environment like Küba? *Küba* functions as the axis around which all sorts of identities circle, now being embraced and now reviled.

Do the collectivity and solidarity evoke echoes of Castro's cigar republic? Is Küba a section of a city with its own laws and boundaries, or is it a lawless, unbounded state of mind? The name Küba refers to a zone with secure houses that appeared in the 1960s. They provided protection against violent assaults. Today Küba consists of several hundred temporary refuges that provide shelter for a handful of non-conformists of all kinds. Whether the stories that the residents of Küba tell are autobiographical, or the product of pure fantasy, Ataman leaves it to our intuition.

Küba received its premiere in Pittsburgh as part of the Carnegie International. Following that, the production took up residence in an old postal sorting station in New Oxford Street in London in 2005. Ataman expended more than two years on the preparations for the project. For *Küba's* stop in Antwerp, Extra City found a deserted harbour warehouse on the Kattendijkdok. Beginning on March 16, this will be a refuge for Küba's 40 residents telling their video stories.

Küba is een project van de Turkse videokunstenaar Kutluğ Ataman. Op 40 oude TV toestellen die opgesteld staan in een oude havenloods doen evenveel gewone mensen hun relaas over een bijzondere samenleving in de sloppenwijken van Istanbul. De inwoners van Küba zijn van allerlei slag: misdadigers, drugverslaafden, tienerdelinquenten, godsdienstige extremisten en de allerarmsten leven er naast elkaar. Waar Küba precies ligt en waar de naam vandaan komt weet niemand echt te vertellen. Sommigen menen dat het in het zuiden van Istanbul ligt, anderen situeren Küba in de omgeving van de luchthaven. Vast staat dat het er in *Küba* soms hard aan toe gaat.

Ataman ging met *Küba* op zoek naar de oorsprong en de actualiteit van die plaats en laat 40 inwoners uitgebreid aan het woord. Het merendeel van de geïnterviewden brengt pakkende verhalen van soms tragische, of bittere gebeurtenissen. Biedt Küba een beeld van gedeelde tegenslag, vrijheid en collectiviteit? Of is de taal van het geweld de verbindende factor van deze imaginaire enclave? Ataman laat ons in het ongewisse.

Met *Küba* peilt Ataman naar de inhoudelijke en geografische omtrek van een stedelijk gebied. Op een tweede plan speurt *Küba* ook naar de relaties tussen een plaats en individuele en maatschappelijke verlangens of angsten. Hoe zien mensen zichzelf functioneren in een omgeving als Küba. *Küba* fungeert als centrum waarrond allerlei identiteiten cirkelen en wordt nu eens omarmd en dan weer verguisd.

Roepen de collectiviteit en solidariteit echo's op aan Castro's sigarenrepubliek? Is Küba een stadsdeel met eigen wetten en grenzen of gaat het om een bandeloze state of mind? De naam Küba verwijst naar een zone met veilige huizen die ontstond in de jaren 1960. Ze beschermden tegen gewelddadige aanvallen. Vandaag bestaat Küba uit een paar honderd tijdelijke optrekjes die onderdak bieden aan een handvol nonconformisten van divers allooi. Of de verhalen die de inwoners van Küba vertellen autobiografisch zijn, of op pure fantasie berusten, laat Ataman over aan onze intuïtie.

Küba ging in première in Pittsburgh in het kader van de Carnegie International. Aansluitend werd de productie ondergebracht in een oud postsorteerstation in New Oxford Street te London in 2005. Ataman spendeerde meer dan twee jaar aan de voorbereiding van het project. Voor *Küba's* halte in Antwerpen vond Extra City een verlaten havenloods aan het Kattendijkdok te Antwerpen. Vanaf 18 maart biedt deze onderdak aan de 40 inwoners die er hun video-relaas doen.

Kutluğ Ataman

Kutluğ Ataman is a film and video maker who lives and works in Istanbul. He studied film in Paris and Los Angeles, and subsequently returned to Istanbul. His work is chiefly documentary in nature, such as *Kutluğ Ataman's Semiha Berksoy unplugged, 1997*, in which he presents the legendary opera diva Semiha Berksoy for eight hours. In the 1930s Berksoy was the first Turkish opera diva, who fought her way up as far as the Paris stage, and died in 1997, at the age of 94, with literally dozens of lives behind her. Ataman's portrait of Berksoy is not only the occasion for a story about the various phases in Turkish society, but also just as subtly focuses on the evolution of the Hollywood film and the history of the music hall. *Küba* is similarly multi-layered. While the individual story seems to have the upper hand, the wide, three-dimensional arrangement of 40 TV monitors in private environments permits one to zoom out from the individual portrait/story to a picture of a whole society. Ataman's narrators are also members of various generations, through which political stories, for instance, gradually yield to a less explicit politics, or ethnic consciousness.

Ataman's work also breaks away from the world of feature films. He has realised two such features. But the films and images by Ataman which thereafter ended up in the art world differ from the conventional film format primarily in their structure and their running time. Ataman often works with multiple screens, with projections that can often run for hours on end, and he permits his viewers to determine the narrative structure for themselves. Despite the documentary character of most of his works, Ataman is never in search of one truth, but rather turns his camera on people who have stepped outside normal roles to rewrite their lives and rediscover themselves. Recording their testimonies is an important procedure in this, because it permits one to catch sight of what a self-image is, and what a person can do with it. Ataman also employs that procedure in part as a self-portrait, and perhaps even suggests the possibility for anyone to identify with his protagonists.

In 2004 Ataman was a Turner prize nominee and with *Küba* he won the Carnegie Award

Kutluğ Ataman is een film- en videomaker die leeft en werkt in Istanbul. Ataman studeerde film in Parijs en LA en keerde aansluitend terug naar Istanbul. Zijn werk is hoofdzakelijk documentair van aard zoals *Kutluğ Ataman's Semiha Berksoy unplugged, 1997* waarin hij 8 uur lang de legendarische operadiva Semiha Berksoy opvoert. Berksoy was in de jaren 1930 de eerste Turkse operadiva die het tot in Parijs schopte en heeft in 1997, 94 jaar oud, letterlijk tientallen levens achter de rug. Atamans portret van Berksoy hangt niet alleen een verhaal op over verschillende stadia in de Turkse samenleving, maar richt zich net zo subtiel op de evolutie van de hollywoodfilm en de geschiedenis van het variété. *Küba* is op eenzelfde manier gelaagd. Waar het individuele verhaal de bovenhand lijkt te halen laat de ruimtelijke, landschappelijke opstelling van 40 TV monitoren en kleine salons toe om van het individuele portret/verhaal uit te zoomen naar een beeld van een samenleving. Atamans vertellers maken ook deel uit van verschillende generaties waardoor bijvoorbeeld politieke verhalen geleidelijk aan plaats maken voor een minder uitgesproken politiek, of ethnisch bewustzijn.

Het werk van Ataman maakte zich los uit de (langspeel)filmwereld. Hij realiseerde twee langspeelfilms. De films en beelden van Ataman die daarna in de kunstwereld verzeild raakten, zijn vooral verschillend van het conventionele film-formaat door hun structuur en speelduur. Ataman werkt vaak op meerdere schermen met projecties die vaak erg lang kunnen duren en laat zijn toeschouwers zelf de (verhaal)structuur bepalen. Ondanks het documentaire karakter van zijn meeste werken is Ataman nooit op zoek naar een waarheid en richt hij zijn camera veeleer op mensen die uit het normale rollenpatroon stappen om zichzelf te herschrijven en heruit te vinden. Het registreren van getuigenissen is daarin een belangrijk procédé omdat het toelaat een zicht te krijgen op wat een zelfbeeld is en hoe mensen ermee omgaan. Ataman hanteert dat procédé deels ook als zelfportret en suggereert misschien zelfs voor iedereen een mogelijkheid om zich met zijn protagonist te identificeren.

Ataman werd in 2004 genomineerd voor de prestigieuze Turner Prize en sleepte met *Küba* in 2004 de Carnegie Award in de wacht.

Arafat



I want to leave here. I want to go to the house in Bağcılar. Sometimes there are fires. If one place catches fire the whole neighborhood could burn down. That's why I don't want to stay. At weddings, when there's a fight, kids get crushed. Because I'm among them they crush me too. When there's a wedding, someone annoys someone and a fight breaks out. It's a nice neighborhood, but the fights are very bad. Sometimes we fight with friends, but we make up again. Sometimes

Arif

He'd just got back from the army. He'd written 'Deniz' on his lighter. 'Who's this Deniz?' 'A male friend, he wrote his name.' We knew there was a girl he loved. He said 'What's it to you?' The three of us jumped up. 'What kind of friend are you?' 'If you've got a problem we'll try to help you.' Then he understood and apologized. If he hadn't, were going to take him out to the Belgrade Forest and hang him by his feet for a few hours, until he came to his senses, and understood what friendship was about. We were going to beat him up. I couldn't go along. I said let's not do it. We talked about it. Now he's always with us. I don't know. You raise a hand to someone you love. I think that when friends fight, they become closer. It creates ties. There are friendships like this too. But then the next day they're together again. No one stays angry. It's in our nature. Beatings. Fights. That's what comes to mind first, when they hear Küba. People get frightened. They think we'll beat them up. But among male friends, we have this thing. Girls don't come between us. It doesn't even occur to you. A friend is really in love, and is thinking of marrying. The girl says, when she sees us, she says, 'Look, your wives are here.' She sees us as

when our friends fight, we separate. Sometimes when kids come here from Cömertkent, our friends beat them up. We beat them up. I do it too. We'd played a game with them. We won, and played another game. We won again, and played the others for cokes, but lost and didn't give the cokes. They came to the park and asked for the cokes. Then we had a fight with them. But that was a long time ago. We had a fight. We'd beat them up if they came around here. Then we made peace. We played a game. Even though, when we're fighting we enjoy hitting the other children, we don't like it when they hit us. Friends come, but they complain. When you are from Küba, you look and act bigger. When you go places, people don't dare to bother you. 'I'll beat you up' he says, 'I'm from Küba. If you mess with me, I have a lot of people behind me.' We went to Comertkent once. At our school there was a teacher. He brought us to the volleyball court. Children were playing football there. There were three people from our neighborhood. The kids were like monkeys, jumping around everywhere. They beat us. This Onur I was talking about, he was about fifteen.



if we were married. We're closer than the girlfriend. She gets jealous of our closeness. It's good to have someone who really understands you. For instance, here, as you said, if anyone's hungry, we share our food. I mean, the money in my pocket is also my friend's money.

Arife

It's not like the old days, we're not resisting. We'd beat up the municipal police, we'd tear them apart. In the those days we had something. The ordinary citizen had something, had rights. Now it's all in their hands. If you touch and official, you get from six months to six years in prison. We'd go after them with shovels, and they'd run look like sheep. We had people, Hatun, me, and this woman from Tokat, Selvel. We'd confront them, with a crowd behind us. There'd be pictures in the papers of us being dragged by the hair. When they wrecked a house, we'd get together and build it again in one night. People gave cement, bricks, and other materials. By morning we'd have it done. They'd come wreck it again, and we'd just build it again. Some houses were wrecked and rebuilt as many as five times. For instance, our neighbor's house here was going to be wrecked again. He got up on the roof, and started ripping off roof tiles. 'We'll wreck it ourselves,' we said, 'don't interfere.' We were throwing roof tiles down on the police. It came time for the walls, and they brought a wrecker. They knocked down the wall and one of them was trapped. He lost his legs. They took him out. He died. And we rebuilt the house, and there

it stands. Over here, they said they were going to tear down the bust of Atatürk. We put the bust at the entrance to the neighborhood. If they tore it down, they could get into the neighborhood. Otherwise they couldn't get in. We woke up one morning, and they were all over the place. We were completely surrounded by soldiers. They were going to tear down the bust. Everyone went and embraced the bust. 'We won't surrender our father.' As if they would listen to us.



Avni

I can take a beating from my teacher. But I get very annoyed. For instance, when I'm talking to a friend. They may snub me. There's a moment of shame. Depending on the place, you worry. One day I was playing football, I couldn't make the goal. My friends asked me why I couldn't make it. I gave my-self a hard time. 'Why couldn't I make the goal?' In that state, I can make problems for myself. Do you beat anyone up? Only certain people. People who irritate me. For instance, at school,



I don't like some of my friends. I'll wait for them to make a mistake, talking about me behind my back, or, someone who starts rumours or tells lies. If I hear about it, I'll go beat them up. Afterwards, I feel bad, and ask myself why I did it. Yesterday, at Engin's sister's wedding, we had a fight. Three thieves came in, about my age. We caught them when they were getting out. We searched them. Then, as they were running away, I head-butted one, then our elders came. I ran after them. Then the elders brought us into the hall. Then we had fun, and then left. Last year, in Haznedar, the neighborhood above us, we were fighting. Someone's ear was cut off with a döner knife. They were provoking our older brothers. They couldn't take it so they set a day for the fight. And then... When I say I live in Küba, they're afraid. They pull back. They don't want to offend you. But if you say Merter, they just beat you up. There was a kid from Güngören. I asked him where he was from. He said Küba, and I asked which part. He said near the grocery store. We brought him here but he didn't know anyone. We said we live here and beat him up.

Bahri

The year Menderes was hung. What year was that? It must have been sixty-one. That's the year I came here. In Sivas, I had one wife. I had seven children. Then I married again. When I married again, my old wife, she said to bring the woman and we brought her. And then she complained everyday. Later, one of our neighbors, he was a very good person. He said 'Everyone knows you. If they bring you to the police station, because you took a second wife, it's shameful. Get out of town. Go to Istanbul,' he said. What he said was a good idea. I came here. I didn't know what to do. I came and built a shack here. There was absolutely nothing here. Before that, in Sivas... I had a lot of troubles. My father shot a man. My brother shot a man. These men weren't strangers. If you looked at their roots, they were relatives. I was afraid, I couldn't sleep at night. I took this rifle. I brought the children in at night. I took the rifle, and slept outside. In case someone came to kill us in the night. I became a butcher and a shepherd. I was a shepherd. I sold meat. I bought cows. I was a milkman. I earned good money. I bought a piece of land. I built a coffee house and two apartments. My son tricked me into selling it, and I was once again left in a

tough spot. After that, thank God, I bring my flock from Thrace. Ten, twenty, thirty sheep in a truck. I slaughter them, and sell the meat. We milked the cows, and sold milk. So we did all right. And here we still are. Life was very good here. The population was about eleven. I'm eighty-three years old. So, you're really Kuba's founder? Yes. I was the original founder. There was no one here. Yes. I began it.



Bozo

I was born in Kuba. It was a big thing, I was my parents' only son. When our son grows up he'll be a doctor, a judge. I was the first in my class in primary school. We play okey. I'm selling milk. Of course, a person has weaker sides, say, when sliding into gambling. We lost interest in school. I left school, of course. Beatings, slaps... Since we were little we were beaten. Only my mother's brothers didn't beat me, my aunt beat me. On our father's side they were all cruel. We were beaten.



We continued gambling. Four or five years I watched poker. After that, I was seventeen. They don't let you into the coffee house until you're eighteen. They let me in when I was seventeen. And I started playing poker. Of course, in the early days I was lucky. But because of our economic condition, the big thing was to have a lot of money. To have a stake, to be relaxed, and play good poker. I watched, and became a very good poker player. I became known all over Istanbul. I played with the Istanbul champions. Even they were intimidated by me. I mean, I didn't even cheat or play tricks. We were beaten with sticks. Of course, they had pressures when we were children. I was fourteen years old. I ran away, out of fear of my father, and went to Izmir. I packed my bag, and went to Izmir. After that, no matter how a person is, when you enter society, a circle of people you go in. No matter how social, how well you behave. When you go somewhere, they think 'Never mind him. He's a gambler. Let's not win him over. Let's lose him.' These things happened, we played a lot of games. Let me put it this way. We didn't really have a childhood. We were beaten every day. Everyone knows these things.

Bülent



There's a construction site up here. About a year or maybe two years before I fell, I used to hang out there. The view was nice from the top, looking towards the city. I'd be there every evening. Usually alone. Because, this cannabis, and other drugs, over time, it kind of pushed me away from people. I started to prefer to be alone. One day, I'd had too many drugs and too much alcohol, I don't remember how I fell. The only thing I remember, I was trying to get up to the top floor.

Dilşah

He came here when he was seven. He's not suitable for anything. He's never had a real job. He suffers and makes me suffer too. I love my husband, and he loves me. He doesn't run after women. He doesn't come home drunk. Thank God he's not so bad. He just doesn't work. I've been working for some years. He doesn't shout. He doesn't beat me. I can do whatever I want, and he won't say anything. He doesn't ask me where I've been. He doesn't complain if I spend money. He doesn't say, 'You take this, you do that' or 'Why did you do that?' Because there's a love. If he gives me money and I spend it, he doesn't say anything. 'I gave you this money, what did you do with it?' I shout at him, 'You don't work. I don't have clothes, I never go out, I don't have food or drink. My sisters-in-law eat and drink and lie around, and I have to work. I give you money, I give your children money.' He says, 'My children are our your children too. There's no work. What can I do?' I still shout at him. He's working now. One week in the day one week at night. He wants to leave his job, but I won't let him. I tell him to go find another job. But he doesn't. Life. Life is hard. Above all for Kurds it's very hard. Us Kurds, we don't comply easily.

When I opened my eyes, I'd fallen into the elevator shaft. When I looked up into the darkness, I saw moonlight. I couldn't move. It was about three or four in the morning. I shouted several times, but it occurred to me that no one would hear. Paralyzed from the waist down, I waited till morning. Because I was full of drugs, I didn't feel much pain. Without realizing it, I passed out for a while, and it was morning. I shouted a few times, and they heard and came. They brought me to the hospital. Anyhow, that's how I got this way. I know that in a way I was lucky. I could have broken my ribs, my heart could have been pierced. Or I could have fallen on my head. Like I said, I know that in a way I was lucky. I don't want to complain about being an invalid, because I realize I might have been saved from worse things. Drugs had a big effect on my life. Because of them, I was in prison. I made some bad friendships in prison. If you go in and you're innocent, you come out a criminal. Do I share responsibility for the bad things? Of course I do. I mean when a person is young and the blood is hot, you don't know the difference between right and wrong.



They won't say, 'I'm a woman, I have rights.' Kurds, whatever you do, they say, 'Let's not bother.' If my mind had been where it is now, I'd never have married my uncle's son. I knew nothing about love. I didn't know much Turkish.

Doğan

I went back to the Political Section, and encountered Garip, my torturer. Once you go in the door you're blindfolded, so you can't see the police. They push you around, tell you to do this and that. They brought me into the Garip's room. He lifts his head and says, 'Hey, how are you doing?' I said, 'Fine, and you?' He said 'Take off his blindfold. Let him see me.' 'He'll see me a lot from now on.' I said, why not, what difference will it make? I've seen him a lot, since then. He was very good at his job. He was a good torturer. Garip came up behind me. There was a heavy rain in Istanbul. By that time the Küba neighborhood had expanded further. Garip was having trouble finding the house. He'd asked the way, but they'd given him wrong directions. One of them let us know the police were looking for me. I went out. I closed the door. I had the key in my hand. I said, 'Go ahead. I won't run away. I'm fed up. Do what you want.' I left the key on the ground in front of the door. If someone comes to open the door, let them see this. The key on the ground, and the package is gone. Whatever, Garip came and the police. He's asking for the house. I said, I'm the one you're looking for. From behind, about ten meters away, Garip goes, 'Hey Dogan, How's it going?' I said, 'Fine, and you?'

I got in the car with Garip and we left. We picked up someone else, over near Yedi Kule. One of the last victims of the Repentance Law. Around Vatan Avenue, one of the squad.. We're in Garip's car. He told me to get out, and get in the car in front. I said, 'I'm not getting out.' He said, 'Stop it. Get out.' I said, 'You stop it. I'm not getting out. You're going to have to take me to the other car.' 'I'm not trying to be difficult, I'm just not an idiot. 'I'm not going to get out alone and have something happen to me.'



Eda



bronchitis. If I can find money I'll get treatment, if I can't I'll suffocate. I can't buy my medicine. My only dream is to have a house of my own. Even a room would be fine. The love is over. He doesn't love me. If he loved me he wouldn't treat me this way. Someone who loves wouldn't do these things, wouldn't behave this way. I love him but he doesn't love us. My husband went to prison. He did three months for misconduct. He didn't want me to work. So I left. While he was in prison, his family didn't support me. I stayed with my mother. But my siblings made it worse by driving me away. I do have good memories of the neighborhood though. Just my neighbors not my husband. We had very good times. Not my husband but mostly with my neighbors. I'm very happy. I've never had any bad experiences with them. They're very good people. I don't want to go to Adana at all. We'd drink tea until three in the morning. We had very good moments. They talked to him but in the end I got a beating. 'Why are you going and telling stories?' They heard it anyway. They heard me shouting. I'd shout. I'd scream.

My husband even pulled a knife on me. He smokes a lot of hash and then he beats me. He tells me and my children to fuck off. He swears at me. He swears at my family. My family tells me to leave him and come home, to leave the children and come. I can't leave them and go. Now, my husband is being unfaithful to me. He has a girl in his life. I even know her name. He has a girl named Fatos. He's doing this to me after three children. He's the reason I got sick. I got asthma,

Ekrem

I said I didn't want any harm to come to her. They're six siblings. I think she's the kindest. In the end she lives in Istanbul. She has the right to go around and see it. She has the right to enjoy herself. The girl has been in Istanbul about a year. The girl is from Yozgat. I look at her brothers. They haven't seen anything, ignorant. They put pressure on the girl. You're not going to go here, you're not going to go there. She is a person, too. In the end, the last time I talked to her I said such and such. If it came down to it I'd take her and leave. She didn't say anything. I've worked there longer than anywhere because of the girl. I wouldn't normally last anywhere for a year and a half. The first place I worked, I stayed about seven months. Because we were making men's clothing, I didn't have to buy clothes. They'd give us clothes. The reason I left was that I couldn't get along. I got tired of the men. The man had people on his staff, in charge of the shop. The water was there. He didn't drink the water. He'd go to his place and ask me to bring water. I was going to go to my first Fenerbahçe game since I came to Istanbul. I told the man I had to go to the game. I'd bought a ticket. He said you can't. I said I can. So I quit the job and left.



I'm a Fenerbahçe fan. So I went. I started at the place I'm working now. I'm still there. I was going out with the girl. I was seeing her. I see her at work. I go in the morning. I don't want to leave in the evening. I don't want it to be evening. I don't know if I could say I'm in love. How far will this life go? That's what I am thinking now. I just don't know. If I knew something was going to happen to the girl, I would take her and go.

Ekrem

We were going on with our lives, until I experienced this great suffering. One evening, my twenty year-old son had his military inspection. He was going into the army this year. One evening when he was going out to exercise with a friend. As he was coming back from exercising, over by the Merter bridge, their car broke down. As he was going to buy petrol with a container, and, as this system always does, it produced this filth, it produced these armed robbers, they stopped him and robbed



him. Unfortunately, he died when he resisted. I wasn't informed. After looking for him for two hours, I found my son's body. They couldn't find him at first. He got out of the car and went to buy gas, I combed the district. And unfortunately, I found his lifeless body. The reason was very obvious. They were trying to get his phone and whatever little money he had in his pocket. They took that. He didn't have it on him. I think he resisted them. Because he wouldn't want to give up what little belonged to him. He didn't want to give it to them. I informed the police headquarters. On the first evening, a prosecutor came to investigate. Hundreds of police, I let them handle it. I wanted the killers to be found. I had a reaction, of course. I reacted to them coming like vultures after his death. You should have taken precautions before people die. Make it safe to live in this country. Give the people some confidence.

Emine

The children's father ran off with another woman. After he left, I had to work. Because I worked all day, my children became addicted to heroin. They shot heroin for years. Two sons and a daughter. I raised them. We saw a lot of poverty. They used to faint, I had nothing at all. They would get money from me to go buy booze and cigarettes. How much I suffered. Oh God how I suffered. I had to beg at the grocery store. They died from heroin. They died one after the other. There was only two and a half months between. During the holiday. The holiday was going to start in the morning. 'My son,' I said, 'did you drink?' I took off my slipper and hit him. I told him to go to his room and stay there. The next morning he was dead. The little one died, they buried him but they hid it from me. They were brothers. Only my daughter was left and then she started to drink. She drank for years. She was on the verge of death. It was a gift from God. I prayed. I don't know if God heard my prayers, but after drinking for fifteen years, she stopped. They hid my son's death from me. They sent me to Bandırma. It was as if I knew. I got up and went to Istanbul. I got a phone call. They told me my son was dead. I went to the Bayrampasa prison. They said he wasn't there. I asked to see his dead body.



I shouted and left. I went to the morgue. I found him in the morgue. They buried him. My oldest son couldn't stand my weeping, so he left home. He came back two days later. I say it was suicide. He'd taken too much I suppose. During the day we were fine. He's dead and gone too. It's not my nature to shout and moan after a death.

Erol

Birds give my eyes pleasure. Their beauty, their colors, their gentleness... There's a yellow bird. A very pleasant yellow. It seems to be laughing with its mate. There are these paper blue Mardins. They sing very pleasantly. They puff themselves up. They puff themselves up when they sing. Raising birds has both a material and a spiritual side. On the material side, you can buy and sell chicks. On the spiritual side, I love spending time with animals. I look after the chicks. When they



flock, forty or fifty of them, they group themselves into formations. They fly around the coop. It's very pleasant to the eyes. My love of birds brought me as far as stealing. I broke into a number of coops. I stole birds from others in order to raise them myself.

One day, about one or two o'clock. In Çesme, towards Güngören and Çesme. There was a coop there. I went with two or three friends. It was on a rooftop. You have to climb the fire escape. We couldn't go up. The temperature was below zero. So, two of us started climbing. We took the birds. The watchman had come out. Our situation became more difficult. We had to climb five or six meters, using a tree for support. My friend put the birds in his shirt and started climbing. With difficulty, he made it. Then it was my turn. I couldn't use my fingers anymore because of the cold. It was below zero. Just as I was about to fall, my friend came and saved me.

Fevzi

When I first left my home, my mother and the others cried a lot, I even cried. But I was obliged. We couldn't find money for bread. I didn't have hope for the future. Everything was clear. Throughout my life I was going to suffer. What our fathers suffered in the past, we were going to suffer too.

I went to different places. When I was fourteen I worked near Izmir. I was working on construction sites. Then in nineteen ninety-seven, I came to Istanbul. In two thousand I went into the army. It was a prison. There was torture. Then there was 'Operation Return to Life'. During that period, C Block was where all the political prisoners were. There were PKK, TI.KKO, DHKP-C, the Hizbullah organization. For twelve years C Block was under the control of the political prisoners, and the soldiers didn't go in. Twelve years earlier, a group of soldiers went in, intending to conduct a search. An officer and six soldiers were killed. They kept their weapons. That's what they told us. Then they started 'Operation Return to Life'. It was impossible for us to go in and search. They didn't let the soldiers enter. They weren't able to convince them. Rather, they couldn't reach an agreement, and there were also some demands.

Then they blew holes in the ceiling and the walls of the prison. My friend was in the supplies unit. He said gasoline was delivered. I thought the organizations had set themselves on fire. I didn't know the State had done it. They blew two holes in the ceiling, poured the gasoline in, and set it on fire. There was a raging fire, from the smell, you could tell that people had died.



Güler



I was still a girl. I was so tired. The weather was very hot. I went to their house for a drink of water. It was nearby. He was alone there. My husband was alone inside. I drank some water. He asked me to bring him some. He asked me to bring the glass to the kitchen so his mother wouldn't see it. He said she'd be angry. I said fine, and brought the glass. He went and locked the front door. I had no idea he'd locked the door. He came and closed the other door.

He tried to kiss me. I said no. I pushed him away. He struggled with me for an hour. Maybe it wasn't what he intended, but I don't know what he wanted. I was completely worn out. I had no voice left. Maybe he just wanted to kiss me, but I wouldn't let him.

He pinned my arms behind me. What was he going to do? Was he going to rape me? What was he going to do? He'd lost his temper. He had his feet on my back. He pulled my hair. I looked in the mirror and didn't recognize myself. My eyes were swollen, from the struggle and the hot weather.

Then, when he shook my head, I must have passed out. When I looked up, he was pulling up his zipper. He hadn't done anything, but I was afraid he might have. I was crying my eyes out. I was shaking all over. I was young then. I ran away and went home. I went out the window and came home. There was no one here. There was a gap in my memory. I didn't know if he'd done anything or not. He hadn't, but I was ignorant. I was fourteen or fifteen. I was crying my eyes out. I was in shock. I was going crazy. I really went crazy. I broke everything in the house. I was beside myself from the shock.

Hakan

I was very affected by one of his songs. A few albums ago, a piece called 'Hero'. It was popular in Europe. After that I was curious, I bought that album, the songs were very good.

Then, by coincidence, another album came out, in Spanish. I bought it. The songs were very good. I don't know the meaning but I like to sing along. Like singing a duet with him. I bought the pirate CD, they don't have the lyrics. I looked for the lyrics for hours on the internet. This all happened because of one song. Now I have about five of his albums. Of all of them are seven, there are two I couldn't find. I'm still looking. That's where the love for Enrique comes from.

My friends say 'you are a man, what do you want with this Enrique?' It's a stupid question. He's not my idol, I don't know how to explain. I like the man, he sings well. 'Bailamos' is the song that made him Enrique. There's 'Hero', there's 'Escape'. One on the Spanish album there's 'Para que la Vida', there's 'Tres Palabras'. On his last album there's 'Addicted', there's 'Roamer'. There are a lot of songs. Some people don't like them, but I like them a lot. I like them all.

The clip was very good, I understood what the word 'hero' meant. He was being a hero, it was a love



story. They made it into a clip. He sacrifices his life to save the girl. At the end of the song he comes crying to the girl on his knees. The way it happens in the old Turkish film movies. It was good. I was moved. It was raining, he fell on the girl's lap. That hit me. I was jealous because I've never been able to do anything like that. I don't have a girlfriend. Of course you'll ask why. The university is full of girls. It's heaven. There's shyness, I mean I can't talk.

Halis



A police friend used to come to the coffee house. He came one evening and said, 'If you have money I have a car. Let's go out and have some fun.' I said, O.K. I'll close up the coffee house and we'll go. We went to a disco. Nothing was happening. He was drinking beer and I was drinking fruit juice. I don't drink. We were going down towards Aksaray. There was a woman at the bus-stop. I asked Müfit to pull over. Just as we were pulling over, this Mercedes comes up for from behind and cuts us

off, picks up the woman. Now, we're police, but it's an unmarked car. They took the woman and left. She had a big panda in her hands, she was stoned. So we chased him. We caught up and signaled him to pull over. He pulled over. I told him to go get the lady. He said no, you go, and I said no, you go. You're a policeman. If I go it won't work. Show him your gun and your badge. Go get her, I said. He left, and suddenly he was back again.

He said, 'Halis, let's get out of here, he's a big fish.' I said, so what? I love big situations. I'll come with you. I went and took a look. I see this plump guy, in an expensive overcoat. I asked him to let the woman out. He said, 'Go away. Let's not make trouble for each other.' 'I told you to let the woman out. I'm a policeman.' He said, 'If we go to the station I'll get out before you do.' I said, 'Give me the woman.' It went back and forth. It turned into an argument.

He got out. We'd started to argue a lot. He got out. He said he was Mustafa from Of, the mafia godfather. I said I was Halis from Bitlis. Look, you have two feet and so do I. Don't make me lose my temper. You're going to give us the lady. I'm sure he's bluffing. I won't back down.

Hatun

An officer came up to us and said, 'From now on you're going to behave correctly. You're not going to shout slogans. You're not going to talk back. Father Evren has come to power,' he said. I asked him, 'Have you finished talking?' Yes, he said, with a hard face. I showed him my I.D. card and said, 'Look, here are my parents' names, I'm not a bastard. I'm from the East, I'm Alawite. This fascist dog can't be my father.'

It was Sports Day or something, General Evren was talking in Taksim. I said I would come. They'd made a wreath. They put it in the car and parked near the square. 'What should we do Hatun?' I said OK. We got black paint, and painted the wreath black. We faced the wreath downwards.

While Evren was talking we'd take it out of the car. There were other speakers, and then Evren came out. As he spoke we turned the wreath downward. Nine of us women held it. The police asked us if we had permission. We said 'Of course we have permission.' Then we put the wreath up. What a commotion! How Evren fled!

All kinds of plain-clothed police descended on us. They took us to the Taksim police station, the officers looked at the wreath. They said, 'This is political, we don't understand it, bring them to the

political section.' So they brought us to the political section. They asked us, 'Who made the wreath?' I said, 'I made it.' They asked 'Where did you have it made?' I said, 'I don't know. Maybe Nisantasi or Taksim.' We weren't going to tell where we made it. I said I didn't understand. I'm illiterate. They took me. Three or four cars, as if it was General Evren himself.



İlhan

They were conducting interviews with the women in prison. The woman says that she used to think everyone in prison was a bad person. 'But when I came in here,' she said, 'I found out it wasn't like that.' She said she learned about life there. She said it was an experience for her. She had many opportunities to think. Apart from that, she was learning a profession. This is a nice thing. Unless you've gone into something, unless you've gone into a community, you can't know that



community. We're always judging from outside. That's why we're distant and cold. People make you wear an identity as if it were a clothing. But it's not how it looks from outside. I too had my prejudices. But when I came in, I saw there was no one to fear. No bad people, no one who would hurt me. Once you've smiled, no one will show you any aggression. They'll respond to a smile with a smile.

No one will throw stones at someone who throws flowers. Since I first got involved with this circle of friends, a lot has changed since that first day. I'm much more at ease. I can open up. I can talk. I have the right to speak. When you first join you listen all the time. But later you have the right to speak. I'm more at ease. I'm more close to my friends. I found people who have the same view of life as me. They didn't change my view of life. I met people who shared my view of life. We don't look at life differently. Maybe we think differently about activism. We might have different views about action. We all have our ideals, and the hope of realizing them. Even if it seems difficult we have ideals. We're united on the topic of material deprivation. This is the thing we share.

Kadriye

We are like 'The stewpan rolled and found its lid.' We're thankful to God. Last year I was selling shoes, I was selling slippers. I can't do that work anymore. I'm past it. Winter shoes in winter, summer sandals in summer. Sweaters, I was selling these things. I got by. Thanks to God, I wasn't in need of anyone. We're still getting by, thank God. I have a large circle of friends. I did time in prison. I did. Yes I did. I did eighteen months. I wasn't really guilty, but the man I shot. Well, he died. Rest in peace. We can't say a thing. It's not good to talk about him. The fault was his, it happened, it's over now. He shot himself, I didn't shoot him. I wasn't sentenced. I did eighteen months and got out. All his brothers were on my side. They knew it wasn't my fault. God knows this too. I did eighteen months, and then I got out. There was a trial. After the second trial I was acquitted. I didn't start any fight. Then a fight broke out, in a wine shop. I came here and didn't fight with anyone. I won't look at anyone's daughters or family or children. I don't like that kind of thing. My life was good here. My family got ill. I got ill myself. All my money went because of illness. My right arm, my left arm, my right arm was paralyzed. For two or three years

I suffered. Thank God I got better. I was in an asylum. I was in the alcoholism unit. I was there ten years. Once, I tried to murder my daughter and my son-in-law. In other words I suffered a lot. I've been working since I was seven. Since I was seven. I'm seventy-one now. How many years is that? I've been working sixty-six years. They say I'm very good. They say that to her. No one ever complained about me. Thank God.



Makbule

I'm very thankful for my children. They're like flowers. But I'm not on the land. I still want the land. I still want the land. I like the neighborhood. You don't like it here mom? No, I don't like it at all. I like the neighbourhood. There is Mother Hatun. We didn't know each other, but she was like a mother to me. My mother died, but she's been just like a mother to me and my husband. I see her as my mother. My neighbours, they're all good. I'm happy with everyone but I'm just unhappy about

the land. Because it's not our land. Maybe not every day, but two days don't pass that I don't weep for the land.

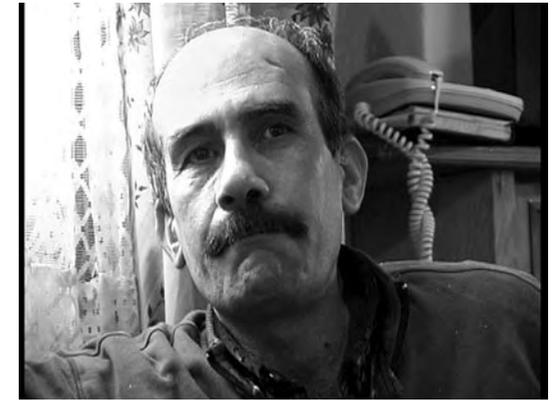
I said I'd write a petition, but I'd write it in my native language. I use my language at home, with my family. I'd write it in my native language. I won't abandon it. I went, fifteen people, I went. Suddenly everyone was arrested and brought down. They sent me downstairs. Downstairs they put me in a car. They said I was arrested for terrorism. I said what terrorism?

They kept us there three days and three nights. They brought us to court and we were released. They kept four people. Me and three others. I was sentenced to three years and eight months. They put people through this much disgrace just for making a petition. There was a girl on duty there. I asked her what we'd done. 'What was my crime? All I did was write a petition.' I said I want my native language. I want education. I want to read. The lawyer, bless him. He worked hard for us. He went to Ankara, he did what he could here. They let us go three days before the holiday. I wasn't sent to prison. I went in a lively mood. I wasn't sent to prison.



Mehmet

We came to Küba. We didn't know anyone in Küba, but we'd heard the name. We had a few relatives here. There were a few families. But the best thing was that we got to know Mother Hatun. She's closer than any of our relatives. We gained a mother here. She holds us together here. She's our mother. They say, 'Küba lost her identity and memory.' Küba is not the old Küba. That solidarity, whether political or social, that solidarity is gone. It was lost. It's not what it used to be. Because everyone is looking out for themselves. There's no solidarity. They're trying to outdo each other. But this too is how the system wants it to be. It's said that if a place develops, it becomes more obedient. Of course, we contribute to that as Kübans. Either consciously or unconsciously. Of course there are tired democrats. I'll hide in a corner. When I hide in a corner, then I'm finished. It's not only you who's finished. The community is finished too. When the neighborhood is gone, the district is finished. When the district is finished, the province is finished, the country is finished. It disintegrates. Do you know why Küba was Küba? It was Küba because it was organized. This is what I loved



about Küba. Because they were organized. But unfortunately, it lost its personality. Only the ruins remain. Only the name remains. I'm not without hope. I have a lot of hope. Küba will develop. There'll be a whole new Küba. More developed, more organized, more scientific. There will be a livelier Küba. It's not impossible. I don't know if I'll live to see it, but that's not important. I am sure I know it will happen.

Mehtap



I left my children for two, three months, for two three days, when they were little. There was no possibility so I left them. I left them in the cradle and went. I go to clean the buildings. I rush there. I rush back. Some people who see me ask why I hurry so much. I tell them I have to see if my children are all right. I always stay at home. It's difficult for me. It's worse than death. This fate that God decreed for me. I'm obliged to suffer until I die. I have no hope.

I don't have a single relative in Istanbul. Just me and the children. Maybe these children will grow up. It'll be a little easier for me. They're going to look after themselves. I have no dreams. I was very happy when I was a virgin.

I get very angry. They don't stop, I shout. I don't spank them. I go off somewhere by myself and cry. What is this that God has done to me?

I lock the children in and go. There could be a fire or something. I lock them in and go. I'm not happy. I manage. For the children. About one or two hours I go to work and come back. I go to the buildings. I look after all of them. Six are mine, and three are another woman's. I wake the children up. I say, wake up I'm going. Afterwards I go. I'll lock the door on them and go. I come to the window. One is crying another is shouting. Mother she says. They see me going.

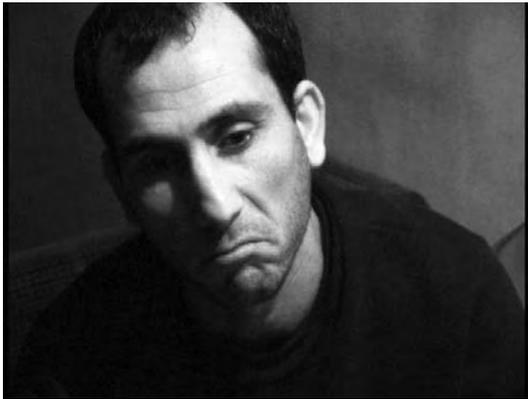
Meliha

Then another day Özgür came home. His face was beat red, but he wouldn't say anything. I saw three or four neighborhood kids gather by a door. They said the teacher had beaten Özgür. I asked why he'd beaten Özgür. They said for no reason. I went. My nephew Tolga came with me. I was angry. The teacher was sitting. I said, 'If you raise your hand to defenseless people, I'll raise my hand to you.' The teacher stood up, when other teachers gathered around. The principal told us to be calm, and asked us to talk in his office. When we went into the office I said, 'Do you educate with your fists? If Özgür does something wrong, call me, and I'll warn him.' Özgür's crime was to come into the class while the teacher was there. He was talking to three or four people, Özgür thought he couldn't see him. So he left without permission. The teacher called Özgür back, and asked him to take off his glasses. Özgür took off his glasses, the teacher hit him twice, then he hit him against the wall. To tell the truth, my aim was to beat the teacher up. The principal told me I was making a mistake. The teacher regretted what he'd done. He admitted he was wrong. I admitted Özgür was wrong but he still shouldn't use violence. He admitted he was

wrong, but later when I asked Özgür how the attitude towards him had been, he didn't say much, didn't want to answer questions. Now he's a little better. I talked to the classroom teacher. I didn't want him to have it in for him. He was the one who'd beaten him. If he had it in for him, I would think of something else. When children are involved it's difficult to keep calm. I knew I should be calm, but I got angry. I had a fight. Teachers. They are not honest.



Mithat



One day I was strolling along the shore, I saw the girl with someone else. At that moment, really, my world collapsed. Then I understood it's an empty world, a big lie. Everyone is tricking everyone else. If I find the right person, I think about marriage. Why not? It's because of my father that I don't trust people. After my father did those things to me, if your father does that a stranger does worse than that. No, you can't do it. You're no good. When he says that,

want it or not, it breaks a person's confidence. Even if that place was made of gold, I wouldn't go back there. In the middle of 2002, he tried to get me married. I mean, he was arranging a marriage for me. He'd almost done that. I mean, he was arranging a marriage for me. He'd almost done that. By arranging a marriage he was trying to get rid of me. Fine, O.K., arrange a marriage and get rid of me. That won't happen. I'm not afraid, I can look after my house in every way. At one point we went to a house. With a girl I'd never seen before, you'd be getting into a long life. It seemed illogical. I'm in the same room with the girl. We're trying to get to know each other. The questions the girl asked me, 'Who are you? What are you?' She knows my family. Just as my family did research on her family, they did research on mine. I told her I was married. 'I got married. I have children too.' I said this to the girl. Why? Because according to our traditions the parents decide. What the parents say, goes. That's how it is. That seems like non-sense to me. To love is one thing, to trust is another.

Mizgin

When I grow up and marry I won't have kids. I'm afraid. I'm afraid of giving birth to children. Sometimes I'm afraid I can't look after the children. So when I get married I won't have children. When people beat them they suffer. Yesterday I shouted at my mother, 'Why did you take me, I wish you hadn't. It would have been better if I'd died. It would have been better for you.' She prays for me to die. She beats me when I'm in bed in order not to make a sound. She puts me to bed. She makes me sleep on the concrete floor. Then I get sick. But I can't tell my father. (...) Someone comes, she dresses her up like a bride. She takes her to a ball. A king falls in love with her. She loses her shoe on the stairs. He finds the shoe. He looks for her. The step-mother says the shoe fits this one. She tries it on. It doesn't fit. They're too fat. He finds the girl. The shoe fits her. He takes her. They make a happy home. (...) They take the children to the park for a walk. They take them to shops and buy them whatever they want. Then they bring them to their grandfather. They play with their grandfather. (...) When someone hugs their mother and kisses her, I get upset. I cry. That's all. I would have liked it a lot. What would you have liked a lot?



To go and find a home like Cinderella. I'd like my mother and father to make up, so we could have a happy home. I just wish to see my mother and kiss her. That's all. Only to see her... If I can be reunited with my mother, I will, if God permits it. I wouldn't even recognize her if I met her. She left me when I was a baby. She wouldn't know me if she saw me. She doesn't know me. She doesn't know I'm living here.

Muhlis

He started shooting. He fired four or five times. Then went out and ran away. I didn't know I'd been shot. I went out and saw blood. But I thought I was grazed. He went out and ran away. I ran after him. He turned and fired four or five more times. He was shooting, but I didn't care. I went for him. I didn't even see the gun. At one point, his cartridge clip emptied. He was turning around and shooting at me. I was dodging left and right. I was determined to catch him.



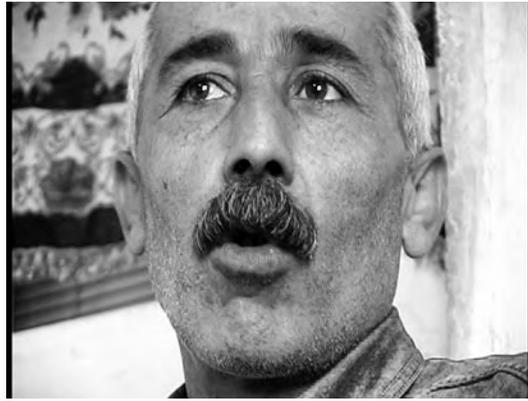
Whatever happened I was going to catch him. As he was changing his clip I thought of jumping him, but then changed my mind. He's frightened. He'll empty his clip into my stomach. I'll catch him. Of course, there were thirty people, fifty people running behind me. Sabri was there. We were about to catch him. The squad car came. They heard the shots. There were a lot of shots, one or two clips emptied. We caught the guy. The squad car came. They shot in the air. They dispersed us. If the squad car hadn't come, we would have eaten him piece by piece. It was a good thing the squad car came. My older brother was fighting outside the coffee house. The whole coffee house emptied out. My brother was there, and a friend. A couple of guys and those peddlers, they had harassed some girls. They went at each other. I hit him too. I hit him three, four times. About five or six people were laying into him. I said, enough, this is a human being. I pulled the man aside, so they wouldn't hit him anymore.

Muzaffer

In the fiery period of the seventies, I was influenced by the revolutionary movement. I spent all of my time with my revolutionary friends. I was quite young then. I'd spend time with these older boys, and we'd exchange ideas. What is it to be leftist? What is it to be a revolutionary?

I went to primary school, but, in the east, finishing primary school meant I could only write my name. They gave me a diploma in exchange for two eggs. It was like that. If you gave them two eggs they'd give you a diploma. I learned Turkish when I was fourteen or fifteen. When I came to Istanbul I didn't know Turkish. I only knew a few words. Until I was sixteen I couldn't speak proper Turkish. On my own initiative, I tried to develop myself. I read, I wrote, I read newspapers and magazines, I read books. I improved my Turkish a bit. I improved my reading and writing, my ability to think. Perhaps even now, at my age, I still can't pronounce properly in Turkish. But it's not my fault. It's the fault of the State and of the system.

The reason I was never frightened is because I know that my thoughts are justified, that they'll continue to be just. I waited for death knowingly. It was enough that I didn't become a traitor to my people and to my community. It was enough for me



not to become a traitor. I came face-to-face with death, many, many times, not just once. We were writing on the walls. The police shoot at us. We'd respond. Or they'd try to lay an ambush. They'd shoot. Many times they tried to kill us. I faced death many times. And I wasn't afraid. I'm still not afraid of death. The only things I fear are dishonour and treachery. When I say treachery, a person can betray himself. He can betray his community.

Nejla

My name was Nejla. Then they started calling me Necati. Necati goes and plays ball. But Nejla doesn't play ball. Necati does. Necati has a lot of sorrows. He's sick within himself. Necati is sick. I have rheumatism in my legs. My kidneys hurt. It's rude to say, but my legs, I quiver from my head to my legs.

Is that why you're into sports?
I enjoy it, but it also gets rid of the pain in my legs.
Is there a girl that Necati loves?



No. There couldn't be. I'm going to kill Necati in the end. Necati is gone, and a brand new Nejla came. I've grown up, it's not right for me to play football. These Kurds will say, what kind of girl is Dilsah's daughter? She doesn't take care of her house. Necati is guilty of wandering around. You stay out until ten at night. I don't give harm to anyone. I help people. I've never stolen, nor have I had anything undeserved. No one hates gossip as much as I do. Gossip is a bad thing. It's bad to talk behind someone's back. It's bad to steal. Swearing is also bad. Isn't it?

Whenever we're playing ball, they say 'Necati throw the ball,' and I throw it. I head the ball and score a goal. Sometimes my father hits me, my mother hits me. I get bored, I want to go outside, my father tells me not to. I want to get some air, I feel constrained already. When I go, he says I stay out too late. When I come home my father hits me. My mother gets upset and asks him why he's hitting me. My father says because he told me not to go. I was wandering around. In the village they were playing a game. There weren't enough players so I said I'd play. My uncle's son said no, I couldn't play. I said I'd play, and I swore at him. I played, and I played better than any of them.

Ramazan

My daughter called in the evening, Raziye. She said the police were looking for me. I asked her why. She said she didn't know. I said I didn't have any business with the police. Why should they look for me? I said I was coming. I got home. My wife asked me why the police were looking for me. I didn't know. The police were out in the street. I decided to go and see. I went out and greeted them. I said, 'Officer, you were looking for me?' 'Are you Ramazan?' 'Yes.' They threw me in the car. There was a friend of mine in the car. We went to the Bagcilar Police Station. There was a young kid there. If you blew on him he'd fall over. They asked him if we were the ones who'd robbed the shop. He said yes. They asked us if we knew him. We said we didn't. I said I'd never seen him before.

'How did they steal the machines?' I asked the police what machines they were talking about. I asked what was going on. I asked if someone could give me an explanation. 'What machines are you talking about? What's our crime?' They said we'd robbed a clothing store, we'd stolen seven machines. They asked where the machines were. I said I didn't have any machines. I don't have anything to do with machines.

I've never done anything illegal in my life. I'd never get mixed up in anything like this. In the end, we were in custody for five days. A prosecutor came, and he let us go. He told the police we were clearly innocent. 'Let them go free.' And thankfully we were let out. We were arrested for something we didn't do. It was during the month of Ramadan, last year. On Friday we went before the prosecutor. What hurt me the most was that they brought us to the prosecutor in handcuffs.



Raziye



If my father tells me to do this or that, I can't say no. But if it has to do with my life, I can say no. My father is an understanding person, he understands me. I won't oppose my mother. Because in the end she cared for you and raised you. Of course if it's something to do with my life, then I would oppose it. Because everyone runs their own life. No one can run another person's life. Of course there wasn't freedom before. You couldn't even ask a question to your parents. But now at least,

children are luckier. They can ask. They want to study. Before, wanting to read was a crime. I know I'll be happy, because I'm happy now anyway. If anything happens, I feel that my family will understand me. I also know it. If I broke the engagement, my family would understand. I know my family. I don't love him. I only like him. There was someone I loved. But he turned out to be uncaring. Of course he was good in the beginning but he was a liar. Because he was engaged to someone else. I had no idea, of course. It's a terrible thing, to love someone. To love someone like him is a terrible thing. But hopefully I'll be happy with this one. Because he's the kind of person who could make someone happy. Marriage is good in one way.

When you marry you see and understand things better. You grasp that you're a complete person. You know what you have to do. At least, you can carry a household. I can do that now, of course. Thank God. Had I studied, I wouldn't be engaged now. Because I wanted very much to study. At least... I'd like to have been a nursery school teacher, or a nurse. But it's not going to happen.

Safiye

A squad car came. They asked for Bülent Koç. I said yes. What relation are you? I'm his mother. They said they wanted to bring him to the station. We asked what had happened. They said it was nothing, he just had to make a deposition. He washed his hands because they were covered in coal dust.

They took him to the police station. His father followed him, to find out what was going on. 'Nine months ago he beat up this man. He died. His family have opened a suit. We have to arrest Bülent.' I was very upset. I cried a lot. But we couldn't find a solution.

I even went to the family and pleaded with them. If he was beaten up nine months ago, don't open a suit against Bülent because he died. I asked them not to play with a young man's life. If he goes to prison, his life will be ruined.

We were to give them five billion. Then they'd forget about the suit. I asked what the money was for. She said that her husband had been in the hospital for a month, and there was a hospital bill to pay. I told her we were a poor family, and we didn't have any money. All I have is a shack. Even if I sold it there wouldn't be enough money. I can't pay you. Do the decent thing, be humane. Don't let the boy

go to prison. But they had no sympathy. Nobody knew that I'd gone to plead with them. I had a sister who was close to them, who knew them. My family had told me not to go, if these people had him locked up, they'd make them pay. But, in order to avoid trouble, I went over to their house. But they wouldn't accept. Five billion, or the boy was going inside. That time Bülent did, what was it? Two years. That's what the court decided. Without finishing the sentence, they released him.



Soner

The title of the movie was Notting Hill. How should I put it? I felt strange while watching that film. Because the scenes come back to back. Unrealistic things happen.

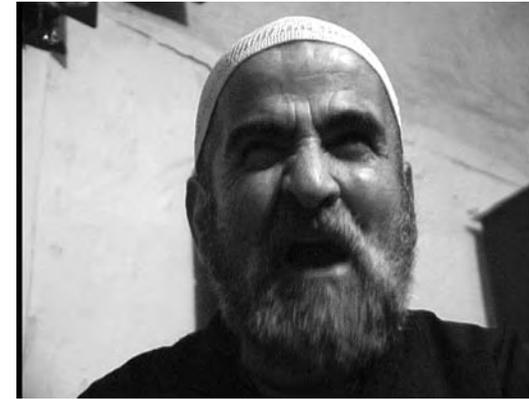
A famous person, buys a book from a book seller, they fall in love and start to be together. After a long while, the press learns about it. Then the press gets all excited about it. The book seller gets disturbed a bit. The film is a bit sentimental. Julia Roberts' performance is perfect. Hugh Grant is too.



The film woke something in me, because I too have someone I love very much. By coincidence, I have a very close friend at Istanbul University. We were watching a basketball game, the Women's League. There was a girl I liked a lot. It was difficult to get to meet her. I mean, I live in Küba, and this girl plays in the Women's League. I made a big effort, and was able to talk to her. But nothing came of it. We talked and talked for seven, eight months. But we didn't get together. She chose basketball. She thought only of basketball. She was afraid she couldn't handle both things at once. If she was with me, she couldn't concentrate on basketball. Because she was afraid to do both at once... I had hope, but recently when we talked, little by little things became clear. She was telling lies, to be frank. When I spoke to her I was very honest, I didn't tell any lies. But when she started telling lies recently, it was obvious it wasn't in the cards. I really loved her a lot, but this film made me understand it a bit.

She's a basketball player, and I'm someone who has a hard time just getting by. She was studying and trying to concentrate on basketball.

Tozkafa



In 1957, in Ankara, I was seven. There was no Küba neighborhood, There was a shantytown. My grandfather, there was this Kamber. Handsome Tony Cengiz' father, never mind guys. His children are lions his wife is a ram, you get a lion from a lion. We get an ox from a cow. And after that, a construction worker from Giresun and Ordu... One from Bitlis came and fucked my mother, and turned me into a foul-mouth. It was his father not his grandfather who married me off to a gypsy girl.

Uğur

I would like to jump from a great height and fall to the ground. To see what would happen. I know what the result would be, but I'm still curious. Like on a roller coaster? The strange feeling when you go down. You're going up and down suddenly. You feel strange. I wanted to feel that feeling a thousand and one times stronger. You're falling, but you don't know the result. You wonder what will happen. It's a strong wish. Now they do bungee jumping or whatever, I can't say it. That wouldn't do it for me. To jump from a plane, to jump out without cutting the speed. I think it would open someone up. That's it. For instance, I'm afraid to go to dark places at night, but at the same time I like it a lot. I like to do things that people are afraid to do. For instance, I work in Soğanlı. I get up at three in the morning, I walk from here to Soğanlı. My biggest fear in life is of dogs. Near the Efes Pilsen brewery, there are at least fifty dogs there. I'm happy when I walk down that road. You go there, a dog comes, you run away. I'm afraid but I do it. I'm afraid of fighting. I feel a big fear of fighting with people. Because he's going to hurt me and I'm going to hurt him. I know it. But I don't regret the times I've done it. If I hurt someone badly, or if I'm badly hurt,

And then she made me happy. I pray to God, Mohamed is our Prophet. And the Angels are his whores.

I came to Küba from my mother's village in 1957. I'm half a century. I'm an elderly youth. And I'm not putting on a show. Fuck off, stop trying to shut me up.

When you look at me you learn swear words, but our Prophet never learned swear words. Stop, let me recite one of my poems.

Are you going to write the story of my life? I was illiterate I loved a girl called Özlem, she was illiterate too. We lived next-door to each other, made up excuses to visit. She was so beautiful, so pretty. When she looked at me I'd be struck by lightning. Earthquakes, disasters, I was happy. She was so beautiful. That's why she can't read lips. She said she loved me a lot.

I couldn't tell her I loved her. What a stupid man I was. Excuse me, there was pictures more and more, a lion-like youth, but a stranger. She didn't recognize me. Put her head down like this. And Özlem looked at me and I melted. I couldn't say I loved her, what a stupid man I was.



I'll regret it, but not an ordinary fight. People are afraid of the things they can't do. They're not afraid of people. You're afraid of things you can't do. I like to do things I thought I couldn't do. If I can do it, great. If I can't, I'll be upset for a while, but I do something to manage.

For instance, no one ever once told me I could go to university. It's because they told me I couldn't that I chased after an education. When they tell me I can't do something, if I believe I can do it, I'll do it.

Vesile



I was pregnant. The day I gave birth, I went to work. I went and cleaned the stairs, and later that day my youngest son was born. I gave birth to all five children at home. I didn't even go to a doctor. I didn't give birth in hospital. The children were born and raised here. I had no one to help me. I had no one at all to help me. This was a very difficult thing. I did it here all by myself. Talking about it relieves me a bit. It does me good. I couldn't find anyone to talk to. Really,

Yalçın

I was still a child. Every time she sent me out I came back. In the end she threw me out of the house. I slept in phone booths, coal bins, in the under cars. I remember they'd dug a ditch, and were going to lay sewer pipes. They hadn't laid the pipes yet, I decided to sleep in the ditch. I woke in the night, and felt as if it was a grave. I got out and went under a car. I'm lying under the car. Early in the morning, the police came and woke me up. They asked me what I was up to. I told them things were bad at home so I slept here. They took me home. They argued with my sister. The police left me there. After the police left, I got a good beating, and I ran away again. There was an amusement park in Kumkapı. I was wandering around, carrying my bags. Someone came up to me. That was the first time I tried cannabis. He said he understood my situation, that I was either homeless or far from home. He gave me money. I took it. Before he gave me the money I was picking up cigarette butts so I could smoke. He saw me, called me over and gave me money. I bought cigarettes, had something to eat. He invited me to come stay with him. He said he was going to buy me a new car. I was afraid of him. I was only fifteen. How could I have a car?

I couldn't find anyone. You can trust neighbours. There are neighbours you can trust and neighbours you can't trust. You can't sit down and tell your troubles to every neighbour. And here, going to this person or that person's house, I don't like that either. Raising three girls in Küba is not easy either. If you go in on a straight road, where does it lead? You're going on a straight road, your aims are not bad. God knows it. You're doing it for your own children. You take two steps, 'Where have you gone? Where are you going?' She goes to the grocery store. 'Where have you gone, girl? Come back. Don't hang out with your friend.' Raising girls in Küba is not easy. I don't even know how I'm going to raise the boys. It's even harder to raise boys. Because here... What can I say? When boys turn fourteen, fifteen, it's not a very good place. Until now, I've held everything together. Thank God for that. I can keep the girls at home, but I can't keep the boys at home. They just go out. I don't know whether he's choosing good friends or bad friends. As a woman, I go out looking for them. Where have you been? Who have you been playing with? Where does he live?



I found it illogical. I turned to my friend and said, 'Let's get out of here. This man is bad.' He said, 'No, let's get him to spend money on us.' This was a friend from Küba. 'If we have to, we can hit him and run away.' He brought us to his place. It turned out he was a drug dealer.

Yüksel

I'd never go through his wallet. But I thought, this man is hiding something. I opened his wallet and what did I find? A woman's picture. I tore it up. 'Who is this whore?' I asked. Now I understood why he had been behaving badly. I don't know, swearing, hitting me. Why is this man hitting me? I asked myself. I spoke to Ayşe in the building across the way. The woman was this neighbor's relative. I said, listen Ayşe, I want to tell you something. It's about honour. The woman was also married, with three children. I felt sorry for her children. I asked her if she knew the woman's telephone number. She said, 'Yüksel, I'm giving it to you, but don't let my husband find out. Don't tell him I gave it to you.' I called the woman. She asked who I was. I said, 'You whore, aren't you ashamed wrecking people's homes? You have children, a husband, have you no shame?' She said, 'Your husband is chasing after me.' Is that so? I said. Yes, she said. Your husband is chasing after me. I asked her if she would come face-to-face with me. 'Would you come face-to-face with me?' She said she would. Halis asked where I'd got the phone number. He insisted. I said that even if he killed me

I wouldn't tell him. You're going to tell me, no I won't. He pulled a knife. 'Tell me where you got the number.' 'I won't tell you.' One day he brought pomegranates, some other food. He told me he'd left her. 'You and the children on one side, and the woman on the other.' He'd brought me clothes. He'd never done that before. He bought me a sweater and a skirt. I said, 'Halis, what the hell is this? You never buy me anything. I'm confused.'



Zübeyde

I'd like to have been the child of a western person. To have been from Bursa rather than Bitlis. If only I'd had normal parents. My father took two wives. He had twelve children from one wife and three from the other. Fifteen children. It wasn't his affair how they were raised. The others grew up on their own, in the village. My mother ran away because of this. My mother looked after us. My father didn't contribute. I think that even after two hundred years, this won't change. It will



be difficult to change. It's still that way for most people. Eight, nine, ten children. I have older brothers there. All of them have ten children. Nothing is going to change. I don't know what will happen to my kids. My daughter is a good student. If they're good students I'll send them to school. If they aren't I won't. At least for them not to be like me. A doctor, a teacher, a nurse, or work in a bank. So they can stand on their own feet. I won't let them marry anyone from the east. I'll do whatever I can to prevent that. It can be someone from the Black Sea, someone from Bursa, but I won't let them marry Kurds. They won't have to say yes to everything. I don't see any chance that anything will change in my life. I'm not an ignorant person. Even though I live in the shantytown. I know about everything that's going on in the world. About politics, about everything, everything. I can talk about these things. My level of culture is very high, but because I live here, they think I'm ignorant. They think we just sit and eat, but I know what's going on in the world. There are peace talks in Cyprus. The Annan plan and everything. I'm curious about what will happen. They shouldn't think just because we live in Küba we are ignorant.

Colophon

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40 excerpts of *Küba*

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