

UTOPIA PERHAPS

by

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Note: This is a two-channel film (CHANNEL 1 & CHANNEL 2).
Some of the below occurs concurrently (i.e. coloured text).
Unless otherwise noted, scenes take place on CHANNEL 1.

FADE IN:

SCENE 1: INTRO

INT. EVIDENCE TABLE

EVIDENCE TABLE set up as a bare wooden table in Court where
evidence is handled/examined.

Monitor screen on table. A hand reaches out to turn it on.

Union Residences marketing starts playing.

MARKETING (V.O.)

*What makes the Union Residences a
Utopia? Five new condo apartment
towers and mixed-use buildings next to
two hectares of green space in the
city's latest revitalizing
neighbourhood. Located just fifteen
minutes outside the city centre in the
Union Neighbourhood, the Residences
will house two thousand people in
luxury-style apartments in the heart
of the city's arts and culture scene.
The Union Residences are a diverse
community, open to all lifestyles.*

PROSECUTOR (V.O.)

All Rise.

CUT TO:

INT. COURT ROOM

COURT ROOM with stand, long table with books/lamps.
Microphones in front stand. Theatre backdrop.

The DEFENDANT takes her place at the stand.

PROSECUTOR (O.S.)

What is your name?

DEFENDANT

[tone]

COURT PROSECUTOR (O.S.)

What is your occupation?

CHANNEL 2: INT. EVIDENCE TABLE

Items are placed on table and arranged: law book opened to section, building plans, neighbourhood pics, mug shot, etc.

The PROSECUTOR stands before court.

PROSECUTOR

(toward camera, reading)

The Court has declared this session open, has established the identity of the Defendant, and has inquired of them whether they take exception to the composition of the Court. After receiving the reply that there is no such objection, the Court has announced that the Defendant, having declined the services of counsel, retains all rights of the defence. As state prosecution I will now begin the examination.

(Looking over to DEFENDANT)

How do you plead?

DEFENDANT

(Defiantly)

Guilty. So that everyone may know I am claiming my right to stay.

PROSECUTOR

What are your aims?

DEFENDANT

To stop the development.

PROSECUTOR

By way of?

DEFENDANT

By any means necessary.

PROSECUTOR

Even by force?

DEFENDANT

Yes, even by force.

CUT TO:

INT. COURT TABLE

PROSECUTOR sits on the edge of a court table, hands clasped together in front of him. The PROSECUTOR directs himself to the camera lens.

PROSECUTOR

Eminent Domain, Land Acquisition, Compulsory Purchase, Expropriation: these are then names given to the power of government to seize private property. Every government has the right to take your land for public use and to transfer it to third parties for development. In its time, the Union neighbourhood was a major driver of the local economy. Built in the thirties, it was an industrial zone servicing the city's manufacturing sector. Now, the neighbourhood is in decline and has been zoned for re-development. In anticipation of construction, local residents have been evicted. Only one remains.

(PROSECUTOR remains on CHANNEL 1)

CHANNEL 2: INT. HOUSE ROOM

HOUSE ROOM set up as DEFENDANT's home: sofa chair, coffee table, side table with lamp, carpet, wall backdrop

The DEFENDANT sitting, directs herself to the camera lens.

DEFENDANT

Before the evictions I had lived here for twenty years. Back then the neighbourhood had everything it needed: a backyard in every home, a playground, plenty of open space... We had a real sense of community. Something that took us decades to build. It was the kind of neighbourhood that can only exist when city planning passes right on by.

(DEFENDANT remains on CHANNEL 2)

INT. COURT TABLE

PROSECUTOR

The City officially designated the Defendant's home for demolition in January of two-thousand-and-fifteen. The Defendant took the case to court and sought an interim injunction to

stop any further action. Instead, the court decided in favour of the Developer adding that the Defendant had one month to vacate her property and sign over the deed to her house. Six months later, she still hasn't left. Her house remains, in the middle of the construction site.

(PROSECUTOR remains on CHANNEL 1)

CHANNEL 2: INT. HOUSE ROOM

DEFENDANT

*It was April the first time they came to have me sign over the deed. They sent two representatives from the Developer with a cheque that wouldn't get me a basement **anywhere else in** the city. The developers think this is just a house. But to me it's home. It's where children are born, where families are raised, where memories are made. You can't just pick it up and drop it somewhere else.*

SCENE 2

CHANNEL 2: INT. EVIDENCE TABLE

eviction notice, offer, pen; close up of documents, scanning

CUT TO:

INT. COURT ROOM

PROSECUTOR AND DEFENDANT stand facing each other.

PROSECUTOR

(toward camera)

Eviction notice from October second, two-thousand-and-fifteen. "You are required to vacate the premises within thirty days after you receive this notice. If you remain in possession of the property after that time, the Developer will have you and your belongings removed by the authorities."

(to DEFENDANT)

All your neighbours complied with the evictions yet you refuse to leave.

DEFENDANT

This is my property. I bought it to keep it not to give it away.

PROSECUTOR

Don't you think society's best interest should take precedence over your own wishes?

DEFENDANT

And who decided another building project was needed? No one gave us a chance to have our say.

PROSECUTOR

You speak as if on behalf of your community but every one of your neighbours signed over their homes. Why not you?

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE ROOM

DEFENDANT

They want to build right on top of me. But I couldn't live with myself if I just left. I want to raise a family here. I want my community back. The developer thinks he come and take it away just like that but you can't merely sweep people aside. And all for what? For another building project?

CUT TO:

INT. COURT ROOM

PROSECUTOR and DEFENDANT face off.

PROSECUTOR

Is this really about home and community, or is it that you can't stand to have a development project in your own backyard?

DEFENDANT

This is about wanting to build a community from scratch when one already

existed here. You want more housing?
Then why take away the ones we had?

PROSECUTOR

You're talking about bringing
development to a standstill.

DEFENDANT

But the developer has no right to come
in and force his vision on us.

PROSECUTOR

Let's look at this less ideologically.
All the actors in this play follow the
law except you.

DEFENDANT

I have no other choice. Resistance is
the only thing left when the law works
against you.

PROSECUTOR

What would the world look like if people
like you decided for themselves what was
right or wrong?

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE ROOM

DEFENDANT

*The ache for home lives in all of us.
Letting it go it is like throwing away
the mother that raised you. That's why
I can never leave. (Pause) The
destruction of this neighbourhood has
been a quiet injustice. No one else has
gone kicking and screaming. Maybe it's
because the sense of loss is less than
the sense of alienation. If I were to
go there would be nothing left to
remind me of what used to be here.*

CUT TO:

SCREEN 2: INT. EVIDENCE TABLE

Fly-through render on monitor of the condo development
project showing all amenities.

MARKETING V.O.

The Union Residences have everything you need: childcare facilities for working parents, a 24-hour gym in every building, private event spaces accessible by online booking, and a wealth of recreational activities in our signature green spaces.

CUT TO:

SCENE 3**CHANNEL 2: INT. EVIDENCE TABLE**

Items are placed on table and arranged: Developer legal docs, newspaper, business card, budget table.

INT. COURT ROOM

PROSECUTOR and WITNESS stand facing each other.

PROSECUTOR

The court will now call to the stand its witness, Mr. [tone]. You will now testify against the Defendant.

WITNESS

I do solemnly declare that the evidence I shall give shall be the truth.

PROSECUTOR

You are the Director responsible for the Union Residences project. Is that correct?

WITNESS

That's correct.

PROSECUTOR

Tell us what you think about the Defendant's fight to save her home.

WITNESS

(thinking)

I think it's a great injustice.

PROSECUTOR

Why?

WITNESS

The Union Residences are meant to be for the benefit of the community. I can't understand how anyone could be so selfish as to oppose that.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE ROOM

OFFICE ROOM set up as WITNESS' office: desk with lamp, phone, papers; office backdrop.

WITNESS sits behind desk.

WITNESS

The Defendant wants to make me out into the bad guy but she couldn't be further from the truth. This city adds another 100 residents every week. We need more housing. That's what this development is about. We provide solutions to local needs while fostering the best quality of life for our condo residents. The truth is the Union neighbourhood is blighted. It isn't good for the city's welfare. That's why we need to tear down these properties and transform them into something better.

CUT TO:

INT. COURT ROOM

PROSECUTOR

Did you involve anyone from the community when you designed this project?

WITNESS

I've been working with city councillors and future homeowners since the very beginning. These projects are always a long collective effort. There's nothing unexpected about this.

PROSECUTOR

Did you ever make the Defendant an offer?

WITNESS

We made her a very reasonable offer. But she always refused to sign over the deed on a matter of principle.

PROSECUTOR

Do you have any sympathy for her cause?

WITNESS

(Shaking head)

You don't go through the backdoor with an illegal holdout. You put on a suit and a tie and win your opponents over with a firm handshake.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE ROOM

WITNESS

Development means more housing, more amenities, a higher quality of life for all of us. Of course I sympathize with people who can't afford the rising costs of city life. But that doesn't make me the enemy. I answer to our residents, to our shareholders, to the city council and to the future generations of this city. Who does she answer to?

CUT TO:

INT. EVIDENCE TABLE

Fly-through render on monitor of marketing material.

MARKETING V.O.

The Union Residences are the next generation of sustainable buildings built with LEED certification. That means the latest in sustainable materials available in the industry today. Each condo tower includes 50 industrial solar panels that provide enough power for a year's worth of electricity. The condo board prides itself on beating its own garbage reduction goal every year.

CUT TO:

SCENE 4

CHANNEL 2: INT. HOUSE ROOM

DEFENDANT ^¾ shot staged as propaganda image

INT. COURT ROOM

The DEFENDANT is at the stand, microphones in front of her. She looks directly at the camera.

DEFENDANT

(Progressively more passionate, staged like propaganda speech)
If it takes an entire village to raise a child, then we and our children are in trouble. The Union project co-opted what this neighbourhood had - community - and it packaged and sold it to you as a commodity; an empty playground for the upwardly mobile. Mark my words, this is not development, this is destruction. This holdout isn't about conflict. It's about demanding a seat at my future. I refuse to leave because I refuse the world the Union Residences represent. A world where everything can be bought and sold no matter what the cost.

CUT TO:

CHANNEL 2: INT. OFFICE ROOM

WITNESS ^¾ shot staged as propaganda image

INT. COURT ROOM

The WITNESS is at the stand, microphones in front of him. He looks directly at the camera.

WITNESS

(Grave, staged like propaganda speech)
The Defendant is an obstacle to our collective future. This is about society working together to build a better city and providing a better quality of life for those that live in it. The Defendant is stuck in the past. Bitter and resentful. Her approach is nothing but conflict. Nothing will come of it. Mark my words, her fight isn't a solution to

urban renewal. She resents not just you and I, but the whole system, our whole way of life. She fears moving forward and upward. She holds out in her crumbling castle but sooner or later those walls must fall.

CUT TO:

INT. COURT TABLE

PROSECUTOR

The Defendant's continued refusal has cost hundreds of thousands in delayed construction and legal fees. If she continues to hold out, she may be forcibly removed by the police. If she relents and signs the deed, she can walk away.

CUT TO:

SCENE 5

CHANNEL 2: INT. EVIDENCE TABLE

Scanning of document.

INT. COURT ROOM

DEFENDANT behind stand reading from paper.

DEFENDANT

(toward camera, reading)

In Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs wrote that "neighborhoods are built not by government and developer but through individual initiative. A neighborhood built all at once shows a strange inability to update itself. It is dead. Actually, it was dead from birth."

PROSECUTOR

It's a strong emotional appeal but your holdout won't change anything. Twenty years from now they'll be tearing down the development and building something else.

DEFENDANT

And what about hope? Can't I hope that the law will come down on my side? That the city will rally behind me?

PROSECUTOR

But there's no one else here. People want this. That's why no one else held out.

DEFENDANT

Go to the street and see how many people actually want this. People just don't understand until it's their home on the line. If everyone knew -

PROSECUTOR

People do know. The Developer has always made his plan and his position quite public.

DEFENDANT

If I don't stand up to him who will?

PROSECUTOR

No one, and no one needs to. People with common sense negotiate. That's what all your neighbours did.

DEFENDANT

But I refuse to take part in this. If I accepted all my actions would be meaningless.

PROSECUTOR

Only actions with consequence are meaningful. In the end, your house will be destroyed with or without your consent.

CHANNEL 1 & 2 (overhead)

The deed and a pen are placed in front of the DEFENDANT.

The DEFENDANT stares out.

PROSECUTOR

Only by signing the deed over can you save yourself. Why hold out?

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE ROOM

WITNESS

Do you want to live in a city where you can't build roads, where you can't build schools and hospitals? I know no one likes change but the alternative is more clearcutting. More urban sprawl. Imagine: all of that just to avoid trampling on a single person's utopic fantasy.

(WITNESS remains on CHANNEL 1)

CHANNEL 2: INT. HOUSE ROOM

DEFENDANT

Utopia. Now there's a word. I can only dream of it but the Developer thinks he can build it. As in all Utopias, the right to make it belongs only to the planner in charge. And with it, the right to destroy.

(DEFENDANT remains on CHANNEL 2)

INT. OFFICE ROOM

WITNESS

(Concurrently with DEFENDANT, facing camera lens)

*This is my land, and I am here to stand my ground. I won't negotiate with those that don't understand that. After all, I want a better world for all of us. The Union Residences is exactly that. Not because it's the only way but because it's the best way. The Defendant has a right to live as she wants, and in my own way I respect it. But you can't put a stop to **progress**.*

CHANNEL 2: INT. HOUSE ROOM

DEFENDANT

(Concurrently with WITNESS, facing camera lens)

This is my land, and I am here to stand my ground. I won't negotiate with those that don't understand that. After all, I want a better world for all of us. The Union Residences can never be that. It will be the needless death of an

authentic way of life. The Developer has a right to build if he wants, and in my way I respect it. But this is not what you call progress.

SCENE 6

INT. COURT TABLE

PROSECUTOR

The last hour is approaching for the Defendant. Like most holdouts, hers is doomed to fail. Inevitably the court will determine that when you protest development you protest against jobs, growth, prosperity...all these things depend on it. In two thousand and nineteen the development project will be completed. It promises to employ over two hundred people and house another two thousand.

CUT TO:

INT. COURT ROOM

The WITNESS is at the stand, microphones in front of him. He looks directly at the camera.

WITNESS*(Gravely)*

Make no mistake, the Defendant's interests do not trump society's. A society where we must all work together to build a better future. A society that rewards hard work and cooperation. We are finally finding a way to balance growth with sustainability, with quality of life and progress. This is the world we are helping to build. One where our residents aren't just property owners, but members of a healthy community and a healthy society. We are helping build the city of our future, not tomorrow but now. We have the unwavering support of developers, of residents, of the free market and the Union Residences are the proof. Holdouts won't save the world but resistance will divide us. Only we can deliver what society wants. This is our path forward and this is my business promise to you.

INT. COURT ROOM

The DEFENDANT is at the stand, microphones in front of her. She looks directly at the camera.

DEFENDANT

(Passionately)

The truth is, the ownership of private property is the only strategy that makes sense if you want to hold out, and the land you own is the frontline. Make no mistake, many holdouts have succeeded, and though our efforts may seem small they can still move mountains. But we mustn't be afraid of conflict. It is the only way we can hold on to what we have. Even if the bulldozers come we must stand our ground. And not just on the construction site, but in every city council meeting, in every corporate show room, and in every household. Don't settle for a vision of the world prepackaged. Defend your own! A system that leaves us powerless is a system that's adrift. We may not be its captain but it is us who sail it. It is us who know how to find our way home.

CUT TO:

INT EVIDENCE TABLE

Monitor showing a shot of the final built condos rising above the tree line. A hand reaches out to turn off the monitor.

CHANNEL 2:INT EVIDENCE TABLE

Monitor showing a shot of the house still standing in construction site. A hand reaches out to turn off the monitor.

FADE OUT.

Notes

Tino seghal - what is progress

Should she say what is progress and not "utopia"?

Their relation is to progress not utopia

Progress is the metaphor

He says everyone needs it, she says no one does

Laundry, mundane - the marketing of authentic life

If he has a fly through then she should also