



Enough With Your Lies - English version

Enough With Your Lies

A play by **Nir Frankel and Tali Hecht**

Based on the novel by **Philippe Besson**

English Translation: **Adi Drori**

Premiere: Tmu-na Theater, 22.6.2021

Tel Aviv, Israel

Cast of Characters

Adult Philippe

Young Philippe

Thomas (pro. "Toma")

Lucas (pro. "Luca")

First Act- Philippe

Scene 1

On the stage - a big board and nothing else.

Old Philippe is sitting' reading a letter.

Young Philippe enters, and writes on the partition:

*Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name¹.*

Adult Philippe: I could have explained it as mere affection, I simply had “a crush on him”, that’s all. Well, that description is just vague enough to apply to any situation, really. I refuse to take words lightly. I could have used a different word. I could have said- soft hearted, or charmed,

Young Philippe: Or distraught, or gullible, or restless, or even blind.

¹ Theseus' monologue from “Midsummer Night’s Dream” by William Shakespeare
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Adult Philippe: Confused? No. All of these words have a less than positive meaning. I refuse to take words lightly...The truth, the naked truth is that I was in love. One must use exact words.

Adult Philippe adds the word “LOVE”.

Adult Philippe: One day, I can easily say when, I remember the exact date, I had not yet realized, but that day was the day “Enough With Your Lies” began writing itself. Well, not exactly. I only first sat down to write years later. Nine years later, to be exact.

Young Philippe: Really?

Adult Philippe: I stand corrected, because this is a lie. We must be precise. I don't know when I really began to write it.

Young Philippe: Perhaps I've always been writing it.

Adult Philippe: I do distinctly recall where it happened. The day “Enough With Your Lies” began writing itself. It was in Bordeaux, in the cafe at the train station, the one that sits close to the rail. Across from me is a journalist interviewing me in promotion of a different book I had just published, “Deciding to Part”. The journalist asks me the same questions- why does the woman in

the book choose to write to her old lover after so many years. I give her some sort of automatic response, I say something about an attempt at healing, about unrelenting longing. The journalist moves on to her next questions, they're always the same questions. Why do you write? What of this is fiction and what really happened? And suddenly I hear my mother, scolding me. "Stop making up fantasies about people, enough with your lies already".

Young Philippe: She would call them lies, not stories

Adult Philippe: Why do I write? Because. To "give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name." Because I have to. In the meantime the journalist asks something else, I can't recall what exactly, because that's when I see him. He has his back to me. He's dragging a suitcase on his way to the train. And this is an image that can't possibly exist, but still I toss that name into the air-

Young Philippe: Thomas!

Adult Philippe: And he turns. And in one instance, one look from him and I'm 17 again. In high school.

Scene 2

(1984. School yard)

Young Philippe: The bell is going to ring in a minute. The break is ending.

Adult Philippe: I can't find my natural sciences book.

Young Philippe: I'm going to be late for class *and* not have my book. That's not good.

Adult Philippe: The natural sciences teacher is also the principal of our high school, who is also my father. Two of his sayings stuck with me. (writes as he speaks) "*Education is salvation*".

Young Philippe: Almost means nothing.

Adult Philippe: (Writes) "*Almost means nothing*". I almost made it in time, means...

Young Philippe: I didn't make it in time.

Adult Philippe: Mostly good, means...

Young Philippe: Not good.

Adult Philippe: When you're just before your final exams in your last year of high school, and you've almost been accepted to the Sorbonne, it means...

Young Philippe: You didn't get accepted to the Sorbonne.

Adult Philippe: Which means you almost made it out of Barbezieux, which means...

Young Philippe: You never made it out of Barbezieux.

Adult Philippe: Which is the most important thing.

Young Philippe: To my dad, that is.

Adult Philippe: I wonder, why is it that certain sentences stay with us and others are erased?

Young Philippe: I mainly wonder where I put that book. I know I packed it in the morning. Did I pack it in the morning?

Adult Philippe: To this day- he died a few years ago, but to this day, whenever I hear the word "almost", I can still hear his voice.

Young and Adult Philippe together: “Almost means nothing”.

(The school bell rings)

Young Philippe: That’s it, the bell. Break was over.

Adult Philippe: Everyone starts moving in packs back to the building.

(Thomas enters)

Adult Philippe: I remember his name. Thomas Andrieu. **(begins outlining Thomas’ silhouette)**

Young Philippe: Right, Thomas Andrieu. I don’t know anything about him. Only his name. I know his name because I dared to take interest. As if it were nothing, in an indifferent tone of voice, immediately moving on to a different topic. They can never know why I’m interested in him.

Adult Philippe: “Book lover”, “Bad at sports”, “Shakespeare lover”, Faggot, Stinking Homo, Fruitcake, Cocksucker, Pillow biter, Pervert, Burn in hell...

Young Philippe: People like you should be stoned, with whispering behind your back, yelling, cursing, emulating blow jobs in your face, with

beatings. A true, tough heterosexual would never allow those things to be said about him. I never talk back. And that's all the confirmation they need really. It's not out of cowardice that I say nothing. I'm not willing to give in, or think it's wrong. Or "wish I was like everyone else". I'm not willing to lie to be popular. It's not cowardice. And Thomas Andrieu, in my opinion, is a nice name. I repeat it in my room, in secret. I roll it silently on my tongue again and again. I like writing it on little notes. I'm an idiot. And now I'm staring at him. I can't help but stare. It's just impossible. It's so obvious that he's not for people like me. It's clear that he's meant for the girls. Not for me. That's it, the bell. Break was over.

Adult Philippe: Everyone starts moving in packs back to the building, and I'm left alone.

Young Philippe: I can't find the natural sciences book.

Adult Philippe: I can't find the natural sciences book.

Scene 3

Adult Philippe: This is a moment I can distinctly recall. That moment, me on

my knees, with my face in my bag, and still I could sense him standing behind me. I slowly lift my head. And Thomas Andrieu is there. By himself. Like me. The blue sky shines behind him and chilly rays of winter sun surround his head. For a passing moment I think he's going to insult me, maybe even beat me up with no witnesses around. But instead he reaches out his hand to me. He pulls me towards him to help me up, but a little closer than necessary. He quietly says: "I don't feel like eating in the cafeteria today. Maybe we can grab-"

Thomas: - something to eat in town. I know a place.

Young Philippe: I'm still staring at him, but can't bring myself to say- I'll be there.

(Thomas exits)

Young Philippe: I'm not sure that really happened just now.

Adult Philippe: To this day I'm still not convinced that I didn't make everything up. That this moment actually happened.

Young Philippe: If I hadn't been held up for a minute

Adult Philippe: If he hadn't managed to convince his friends to go on without

him, as he admitted to me later -

Young Philippe: If the tiniest element of this plan had gone wrong, this moment never would have happened.

Adult Philippe: In the world of literature, this would be the turning point of the story. The peripeteia, as Aristo calls it. That one moment that changes the very rules of the game. But this was that moment. Here, it begins, in winter, I'm seventeen.

Scene 4

(Diner. Thomas enters)

Adult Philippe: (Writes as he speaks)

A gas station cafe

Barbezieux (a godforsaken hellhole)

February 1984

Number one on the charts: "*Sweet Dreams*"²

Young Philippe: I arrive at the cafe at the designated time. It's a place right on the edge of town, almost completely desolate.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeMFqkcPYcg&list=PLDintB9nu_R7TcqgnLx2zeMQD0XDTECF6&index=2

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Adult Philippe: It's best to describe it using your senses.

Young Philippe: I smell cigarettes. In the corner I see three drunkards starting a fight, and three trucks outside. I can feel my shoes sticking to the floor, filthy with food scraps. There are a couple of truckers and old drunk men sitting inside, and that's it. Disgusting.

Adult Philippe: Today I understand him, no one here will recognize us. He doesn't want us to be seen together.

(Young Philippe goes to sit next to Thomas. Pause)

Thomas: You probably want to know...why I... I can't do it anymore. I give up. I'm tired of it. If someone found out...and I'm totally against it. But enough. I can't take it anymore. **(Pause)** So that's it. Do what you want with it.

Young Philippe: **(After a long pause)** Who else knows?

(Adult Philippe writes: *Because someday you're going to leave and we're all going to stay*)

Young Philippe: Why me?

Thomas: Because someday you're going to leave and we're all going to stay

Adult Philippe: I recall that sentence and it brings tears to my eyes.

Thomas: I know a place.

Adult Philippe: A thousand questions are racing through my head.

Young Philippe: How did it begin for you? When? How come no one can see it on you? How did you manage to hide it til now? Are you in pain? Are you just in pain? Am I your first?

Adult Philippe: But all I can manage to do is nod.

Young Philippe: I'm coming with you.

Adult Philippe: We break into the school's empty gymnasium. And there, amid the scent of sweat and bleach, in the locker room showers, it happens there.

(He exits)

Scene 5

(Locker room)

Young Philippe and Thomas come closer to one another in complete silence. Young Philippe sits down first, takes a marker (body safe) out of his pocket, lays it between them.

Thomas sits down next to him.

Philippe takes off his shirt, Thomas follows.

Philippe begins drawing a winding line on Thomas' body with the marker, later Thomas takes it from his hand and draws on Philippe.

They get closer and closer.

Thomas freezes. He rises off the bench, takes his things and exits.

Adult Philippe: (Enters) And immediately after, when we're both still mute with shock, he gets up. Gets dressed. Without exchanging even one glance with me, without saying a word. Goodbye?! (pause) And he disappears.

Scene 6

(Adult Philippe writes: *missing*)

Young Philippe: I know that sense of abandonment very well. It's haunted me since I was seven years old and my mother lost me at the

carnival. That fraction of a second where she disappeared from my sight and I thought I'd never see her again. And I'm alone. Throughout that following week I go back to being that seven year old with abandonment issues. I realize that he will not come to me. He has forced us into complete silence. But I keep hoping for a sign, some hidden sign that only the two of us could understand. But there's nothing. He's late to school, at the end of each day he rushes to leave. He's aloof. Even hostile. He probably regrets the stupid mistake he made with me. Or maybe he's just disappointed in me? With my skinny body, my glasses, my ugly sweaters...

Adult Philippe: That list of flaws is coming back to me.

Young Philippe: It was just temporary insanity on his part, why would he want me?

Adult Philippe: But I miss him all the time.

Young Philippe: Nine days.

Adult Philippe: I counted them. The number is inked in my mind.

Young Philippe: Nine days later I find, in my locker... a note. On it are written only a time and place. Apart from that- nothing. Not my name,

not his signature. No nicknames, nothing that could be used to prove that any emotion has transpired between us.

Adult Philippe: A place, and time.

Young Philippe: We're going to meet again. **(he exits)**

Adult Philippe: I run there in the pouring rain and get to the equipment shed by the football field. Thomas is already there, waiting.

Scene 7

(old sports equipment shed. Thomas enters and arranges the space, throws out of a box some items: basketball, Twister game. Sits on the twister. Removes some of his clothes. Young Philippe enters)

Young Philippe: How did you manage to open the lock?

Thomas: I've been doing it forever. Breaking locks.

Young Philippe: No lock can resist you, hah?

(Pause. He comes to Thomas, who pulls him closer, stays standing as Thomas touches him. When they become overheated, Young Philippe backs away)

Young Philippe: Where do you live?

Thomas: **(doesn't stop)** Legard.

Young Philippe: That tiny village by the highway?

Thomas: Yes. Ever been?

Young Philippe: I don't think so.

Thomas: Makes sense. That's where our farm is.

Young Philippe: How nice, what do you farm?

Thomas: **(Understands, shifts back to sit)** We have a vineyard. And some cows.

Young Philippe: Milk cows? I did some milking once. **(Dribbles the basketball)** There's a milk farm right by our house so they showed me how. I was surprisingly very good at it. **(Drops the ball)** I know it's hard to imagine.

Thomas: You're not exactly the type. You're other places' type.

(Takes the ball from him, they begin to toss it back and forth)

Young Philippe: And do you like it? Working on the farm?

Thomas: Yeah, I like the farm. But I also want other things in life.

Young Philippe: You can do other things. You can go study whatever you want, medicine, pharmacy, whatever you'd like.

Thomas: It's not like that. I'm the oldest. And the only son.

Young Philippe: So what?

Thomas: So I'm the oldest, and the only son! with two sisters and if I don't take the farm, there will be no farm.

(Thomas begins folding up the mat, he wants to leave).

Adult Philippe: (twists the board) Left hand blue

Thomas: What?

Young Philippe: Left hand blue?

(Thomas approves. They lay the mat in silence. They start to play)

Adult Philippe: Right foot blue

Thomas: Are you an only child?

Young Philippe: No, I have an older brother.

Adult Philippe: Right foot blue

Thomas: Lucky you.

Young Philippe: Not really. You know that saying about royal families, the heir and the spare? So my brother is the heir. I'm the spare. He's a genius.

Adult Philippe: Right hand yellow

Thomas: Royal families. There really is no connection between my world and ours. None. I'm the **oldest**. And the **only son**. I have two younger sisters. There's Natalie, she's sixteen, she "left" school, she's studying to be a secretary. And my baby sister is Sandrine, she's eleven. She's a sweetheart. She's at my hip at all times. No one's really dying to take care of her, my parents wish they never had her. But she was born like that, abnormal. The doctors say she'll never be normal. So she's always at home, I'm the one who looks after her. Mom and Dad and Natalie

don't treat her well, to my mother she barely exists. All she does all day is pray to the crosses over her bed for Jesus to give her the strength to "cope", no wonder she has no time or energy to be with her daughter. **(pause)** So I'm the oldest. And the only son. **(pause)**

Young Philippe: We're not in the middle ages anymore, you know. You have to think about your future.

Thomas: Everything's really simple for you, right?

(Philippe starts to answer, Thomas kisses him. Philippe kisses him back. They lay down. Adult Philippe enters, writes on the partition the lyrics to Edith Piaf's song "Hymn to Love" which sounds in the background. He writes:)

*If the sky should fall into the sea
And the stars fade all around me
You are the whole world*

Young Philippe: **(still laid down as they hug)** I like your watch.

Thomas: This? It's a Casio. Digital.

Young Philippe: Is it new?

Thomas: Yeah, it's a birthday present from my mother.

Young Philippe: It's nice.

Thomas: Thank you.

Young Philippe: And happy birthday!

Thomas: Thank you.

Young Philippe: And what did your Dad give you? You didn't say anything about him.

Thomas: The rain's stopped. I have to go. **(backs away)**

Adult Philippe: A sore spot.

(Hurries to write on the partition- *No talking about Dad*)

Young Philippe: Will you take me on a spin on your motorcycle sometime?

Thomas: Do you really want to?

Young Philippe: Yes. of course!

Thomas: Then I'll take you. **(he exits)**

Adult Philippe: He'll keep his promise. Though out of town, on abandoned roads, with helmets on our heads...

Young Philippe: But what does that matter. I get to hold him tight! We're outside and I get to hold him tight.

Scene 8

(party)

Adult Philippe: And there was also that time we met by chance. It was the first time we met "by chance" **(Writes: *It happened at a party*)** It happened at a party.

Young Philippe: I love parties!

Adult Philippe: I hate parties. Beers. Drunk people. Truth or dare. But I promised my friend Nadine I'd "make an effort". I look around to find Nadine, and then I see him.

(Thomas dances ecstatically)

Adult Philippe: He has his back to me. I want to just toss his name into the air-
(writes: *And I say nothing*) Suddenly a young woman hangs on to him, she kisses him. He doesn't resist. He kisses her back. She whispers something in his ear, and I notice the exact moment his gaze captures me.

(The three of them freeze at once. slowly start dancing again)

Adult Philippe: I drink a little. Talk to people. I can't dance, but I dance anyway, so what? I throw up in the bathroom. Continue dancing. There's someone I'm not allowed to kiss. We can't be seen together. That was the rule. That were it to end between us, no one would know it ever happened. (Writes: **When* it ends between us.*)

Young Philippe: Ass stories are better than love stories. But sometimes it's not up to you.

Thomas: (silencing him) What do you want?

Young Philippe: I want to not be a shameful secret.

Thomas: This isn't up for debate. If you rather we stop, we stop. Here and now.

Young Philippe: No, no stopping. **(long hug)**

Adult Philippe: We meet again, and then again, and again, and again. In my room, in the shed, in my room, in the field on the motorcycle, in my room The location is of no importance, there is no world around us. It's always the last time. And there's always only one more time. We can't stop.

In July we arrange to meet in our usual field and celebrate our final exam results.

Scene 9

(a field. Thomas waits for Philippe. He is reading a letter, then folds it into his pocket. Young Philippe enters with the grade sheet, a camera around his neck. Thomas grabs his sheet and reads it)

Thomas: Did you really think you wouldn't pass? Did your hands shake when you searched your name on the list? It was a sure thing that you would finish at the head of the class.

Young Philippe: That's not going to stop me from being happy. Let me enjoy the moment. It's over, isn't it?

Thomas: It is. **(looks at the camera)** What's this?

Young Philippe: My parents bought this for me, as a graduation gift.

Thomas: I guess they weren't too worried about your results if they bought it ahead of time.

Young Philippe: Do you want to come over, to celebrate? They're out of the house.

Thomas: Is that the only excuse you could find for us to go fuck at your place?

Young Philippe: well... yes?

Thomas: **(Takes his camera and photographs him)** sit.

Young Philippe: Free at last. Now we can start living. It's a shame you can't capture this feeling with a camera. **(Philippe takes back the camera and shoots the landscape)** So what are your plans for the summer?

Thomas: I have family in Spain.

Young Philippe: I know, you already told me that. You go to your family in Spain every summer, to work? Where in Spain?

Thomas: You wouldn't know it, it's a little village. It's called Vilalba.

Young Philippe: Of course I know Vilalba. It's a sort of pilgrim village, I read about it in some book. Why are you smiling?

Thomas: It's just incredible that I'm there every year, and you know the place better than I do with your books.

Young Philippe: When are you supposed to come back?

Thomas: The first week of August. Probably.

Young Philippe: What's the address? Maybe I could send you a postcard. Or a letter. Or you could send me one.

Thomas: You can't.

Young Philippe: Can I take a picture of you? One picture.

Thomas: (pause) You can. One picture.

(Young Philippe snaps a photo of Thomas, smiling for the camera. They freeze. Adult Philippe enters, holding the photograph)

Adult Philippe: He's wearing a pair of jeans, a checked shirt, he has a blade of grass between his fingers. He's smiling in this photo. He let me photograph his smile, despite the fact that he's not the smiling type, for me to have as a keepsake.

(He attaches the photo of Thomas to the board. Thomas exits)

Scene 10

Adult Philippe: July crawled by at a snail's pace. Family trips. The beach. Boredom. Longing. Thomas is gone.

Young Philippe: he's in Spain.

Adult Philippe: like every summer. I write a letter and some postcards and don't send any of them. I have no address to send them to, and he forbade it.

Young Philippe: August comes.

Adult Philippe: I still wait. And wait.

Young Philippe: By mid-August I'm losing my mind, I can't take it anymore, I

call his house. Natalie, his sister, picks up. The one who's studying to be a Secretary.

“So anyway, Thomas is staying in Spain, we have family there, I don't know if you know. Anyway, they offered him a job there, and he took it. He didn't want to continue his studies anyway, so what does it matter where? Anyway, he's not coming back”. **(pause)**

A sound begins echoing in my head when she hangs up. Like the foghorn of a ship as it grows farther from the shore. Yes, that's the sound. I swear. I don't know why.

(Young Philippe begins wiping the board clean of all that was written on them during the first act, leaving only the sentence Because someday you're going to leave and we're all going to stay)

Adult Philippe: And then a sense of shock that hits my whole body. Like an intense blow. Like a collision. I am the victim of an accident. I am the severely wounded they rescue from the wreckage and rush on a gurney for urgent surgery because he's losing too much blood. I'm riddled with fractures, and the anesthetic is slowly wearing off and I begin feeling the aches and pains all over and the full impact of the crash. Then I start rehabilitation, funny word, rehabilitation, with no roots, no will to get better, but that's how it goes, you get better, you heal, sometimes, you heal because there's no other option.

A few weeks later I leave Barbezieux. Boarding school in Bordeaux. Then industrial management studies in Paris. I begin living the life that was chosen for me. I walk the path others paved for me. I march back in line. I erase Thomas Andrieu.

(Young Philippe finishes erasing the partition. Exits)

Second Act: Lucas

Scene 11

(2007. Train station)

Adult Philippe: One day, I'm in a cafe at the train station in Bordeaux, the one that's near the tracks. Across from me is a journalist interviewing me in promotion of a different book I had just published, "Say Goodbye". She asks, and I give her some sort of automatic response. They're always the same questions. Why do you write? What of this is fiction and what...

(Lucas enters)

Adult Philippe: Thomas! (Lucas turns around) And it's almost him.

Adult Philippe: You're the spitting image of your father.

Lucas: I get that a lot. Nice to meet you, Lucas.

Adult Philippe: Philippe.

Lucas: You're a childhood friend of my Dad's right? You probably

liked him a lot if you looked at me like that.

Adult Philippe: Yes, that's right. A childhood friend. Do you have a couple of minutes? Or are you in a rush?

Lucas: I have a couple of minutes, sure.

Adult Philippe: How's your father?

Lucas: He's great, thanks for asking.

Adult Philippe: Does he still live in the same place?

Lucas: Yeah, my dad is not exactly the type to leave. He and my mom have been living in the same house for the last twenty years or so.

Adult Philippe: How old are you, if I may ask?

Lucas: You may. Twenty two.

Adult Philippe: And do you still look like him?

Lucas: Are you asking what he looks like now? He hasn't changed one bit, you'd be stunned if you saw him. **(He searches his phone**

for a photo) I think I have a photo of them here somewhere...I can't find it. But he looks just like he did in high school. Mom hasn't really changed either. They have a photo album from Spain at home, from the wedding, they look exactly the same. Like two high school kids, they were always a beautiful couple, still are.

Adult Philippe: It must be nice. To stay the same.

Lucas: Yeah. Well, they live well. Living the dream, as they say.

Adult Philippe: As they say...

Lucas: **(Peeks at his watch)** I'm sorry, I have to go.

Adult Philippe: It's nice, your watch.

Lucas: This? It's vintage. A digital Casio. A birthday gift from Dad.

Adult Philippe: So is that where you're going? To Dad's farm?

Lucas: Oh, I haven't lived there for a while. I study marketing at the university in Nantes.

Adult Philippe: To promote your wine?

Lucas: Yeah, right. **(He laughs)** No, I want to work in export. In the U.S. probably. I'm sorry, I have to go or I'll miss my train.

Adult Philippe: Oh, of course, me too. I have a journalist here waiting, I'm in the middle of an interview...

Lucas: An interview, good luck! Are you publishing a new book?

Adult Philippe: Yes... You knew I was a writer?

Lucas: I know who you are. I knew from the moment I saw you. My dad told me about you when I was little. We once saw you by chance in some interview on T.V., and he said you went to high school with him. He was really surprised. Well, it's not every day that you see someone you once knew on the television screen.

Adult Philippe: And you recognized me? From seeing me once on T.V.?

Lucas: No, I've seen you lots of times since. Whenever it was announced that you're going to be appearing on some show, we'd turn on the television and watch. He'd watch. Mom wasn't really interested so she'd always move to the kitchen, and I was a child then. I found it a bit boring, but I wasn't

allowed to bother him. He'd demand complete silence. He's also read all of your books. And he's not the type of guy who reads books. He has them all at home. I also read one of them, I forget the name- the one with the painting on the cover, a famous painting, American, I think? What's that book called?

Adult Philippe: "In the Absence of Men".

Lucas: Yes, "In the Absence of Men". I really liked it. Is that a true story? Something that happened to you?

Older Philippe: No, it's completely fictional. I never write about my life. It doesn't interest me. **(Lucas smiles)** You better run or you'll miss your train...

Lucas: Do you have something to write with? His phone number. If you want to get in touch. You should have it.

(Lucas types in the number. Young Philippe enters)

Lucas: Call him. It'll make him happy. **(pause)** Give me your number too. You don't seem the type to call.

Adult Philippe: What about him? Is he the type to call?

Lucas: You tell me. Good luck with your book! (**Lucas exits**)

Scene 12

Young Philippe and Old Philippe start talking simultaneously.

Adult Philippe: I walk back to my hotel in Bordeaux.

Young Philippe: I can't stop thinking about Thomas.

Adult Philippe: Tomorrow I go back home to Paris. I have to pack. I have to take a shower.

Young Philippe: He's returned from Spain a long time ago. He has a son.

Adult Philippe: I have to get home. Someone's waiting for me at home. I have someone. He loves me.

Young Philippe: Whenever I appeared on television he'd watch. He'd silence everyone and watch.

Adult Philippe: He's twenty years younger than me, he doesn't like boys but he likes me. A complicated story.

Young Philippe: And he lives on the same farm. In the same Charente. With the same phone number. I know it by heart.

Adult Philippe: **(finally addresses him)** So what if I remember it? I'm from a generation when you still had to memorize phone numbers.

Young Philippe: I memorized it. I know it by heart.

Adult Philippe: So what? I can call Thomas, talk to him, make conversation.

Young Philippe: It would be anything but casual conversation. I know it'll be much more than that.

Adult Philippe: He's married and living on a farm in Charente. I write novels and live in hotels around the world. Two parallel lines that could never meet. He won't even recognize me.

Young Philippe: He hasn't changed at all. And he's read all my books. He has them all in his home. And he's not the reading type!

Adult Philippe: Life has taken us in such different directions. We wouldn't even know one another. We'd both remember that we once wanted to be together, but we won't remember why.

Young Philippe: That moment, that crazy coincidence that drew us to one

another?

Adult Philippe: It was just a moment, and it's over. Finished. It will never return. That's what happened to us.

Young Philippe: Enough! I'm calling. **(pause)** Thomas? It's Philippe. Besson. **(pause)** yes, me too. **(pause)** He barely says anything, and I can't tell whether he's emotional or if the line is bad. He's not the talkative type. I'm doing well. **(Pause)** In Paris, but now I'm in Bordeaux. **(Pause)** Yes, I'd love to... He suggests a place, date, and time. We're going to meet again.

Adult Philippe: I would never call Thomas. **(pause)** In the hotel room I open my suitcase, and start packing. The following day I return home to Paris. And so on. More interviews, more travels, more hotels, time passes. I move on.

Young Philippe: And Thomas? He never...?

Adult Philippe: No. Thomas never called either.

(Young Philippe exits)

Third Act: Thomas

Scene 13

(2016. Philippes home. Lucas' voice sounds in a recorded message)

Lucas: Hello, Philippe. I got your number from your publishers, I hope I reached the right person...This is Lucas Andrieu, I'm Thomas Andrieu's son, we met once at the train station in Bordeaux about... nine years ago. I hope you remember me...Anyway, I'm in France now, for a few days, and I wanted to know if we could meet. You could text me to let me know when that would be possible, I'll make myself available. **(A pause)** And I also have something I need to give you. This is my number.

(Lucas enters, stands at a distance from Adult Philippe)

Adult Philippe: Lucas, hello.

Lucas: Hello.

Adult Philippe: You've changed a little.

Lucas: Well it's been some time. Nine years.

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Adult Philippe: Yes, nine years...**(Pause)** You're tanner.

Lucas: I'm in California now.

Adult Philippe: California. Very nice. And you came back to Charente for a family vacation?

Lucas: I came back to Charente. I made it in time.

Adult Philippe: **(A long pause.)** When did it happen?

Lucas: Two weeks ago. I flew back the moment they let me know. I made it in time to see him in his coffin. He looked the same. He looked...asleep. Whoever did his makeup did a good job, at least. You couldn't even see the marks around his neck. **(pause)** They found him hanging in his barn. **(pause)** I know what you want to ask. No, he didn't leave any explanation. We didn't find a letter. We looked everywhere. But you can explain it, can't you? **(Pause)** I think I began realizing what happened when we met that first time. When you were looking at me.

Adult Philippe: When I was looking at you?

Lucas: I recognized you. I knew who you were. You talk freely on

television about who you are. That day I walked into a bookstore, I had an inkling of a feeling. There were three of your books there and I bought all three of them. “His Brother”, “An Italian Man” and “Saying Goodbye”. I read them all, and I immediately understood.

Adult Philippe: What did you understand?

Lucas: I understood why you write.

Adult Philippe: What do you mean? I don’t follow.

Lucas: You don’t? In “Saying Goodbye”, you write letters to the man you loved and left you, and you keep travelling in an attempt to forget him.

Adult Philippe: It’s not me who writes the letters. It’s a woman, the story’s heroine.

Lucas: The book “A Man from Italy” is about a man contemplating whether to choose women or men, and he’s clearly lying.

Adult Philippe: I find that to be a burning issue. But it’s not based on a true story.

Lucas: In the book “His Brother”, the protagonist is named Thomas Andrieu. **(pause)** I did the math. I realized why you write. I realized that you loved him, but that wasn’t the whole story, was it?

A few days after we met in Bordeaux back then, I told Dad I met you. You should have seen his face. He didn’t say a word, he didn’t move, but I swear to you, it was as if he’d collapsed on his knees. A second later he caught himself, as if nothing happened, but I saw it. At that moment I realized. My father was in love with a man. In love with you.

You have nothing to say?

Adult Philippe: I don’t know if that’s true.

Lucas: You don’t know if that’s true. And so it happened, completely by chance, that two days later he gathered us in the kitchen to inform us that he’s leaving. He “needs a change in life”. Just like that, overnight. He calls Mom and I to the kitchen, sits us down together and with no introductions, he tells us. Just like that. Without hesitation, without skipping a beat, “I’m leaving”. My mother started crying, and he just silenced her. “I’m not done. I have more to say”. What he had to say was mainly different instructions, what to do with the farm, who to sell it to. He won’t be coming back. That’s it, he’s done with all of this. And he’s already spoken with an attorney who’s going to take

care of the divorce, he wants her to start a new life, and he's going to let her go by the book. And he's leaving her everything, he wants nothing for himself. Not out of generosity or anything like that. He wanted to completely erase us. He said he wasn't worried about me, I'm all grown up, I don't need him any more. "I've done all I could". I remember that sentence of his. He refused to say where he was going. He doesn't want a relationship with us.

My mother broke down at that moment. Perhaps she hoped her tears would shift something in his heart. She begged him to try to return to the straight and narrow. He replied that he had been walking "the straight and narrow" for so long, that he's never tried any other path. I didn't say anything. I sat there holding my breath as he turned into a stranger before my eyes. In a single day, he was erased from our history. We heard nothing from him for eight years. Not a word, not a phone call, no one knew where he lived. From time to time we asked ourselves if he's still alive. What's going on with him. Until we just stopped asking. In time...you get used to anything. Even betrayal.

Adult Philippe: Betrayal?

Lucas: Is there a more suitable definition? Loss? Abandonment? An urge to spread your wings? Desertion? Shirking your duties? I prefer betrayal.

Adult Philippe: Did you try to find him?

Lucas: No. I thought about hiring a private investigator, but eventually I dropped it, gave up. Maybe I was still mad at him, I don't know. **(Pause)** And then, out of nowhere, one bright morning, he came back. After eight years. He moved into some farmhouse in the area . No one came to visit him. No one wanted to hear from him. Not his parents, certainly not my mother, after he broke her down like that. He's dead to them. They didn't even come to the funeral. There's no doubt about the fact that he...my Dad paid a price for his choices in life. I finally went to visit him. About a year ago. I wasn't sure he'd open the door for me, but right away he invited me in. Offered me a drink. He'd really aged. Aged in a way that Was... frightening. I barely recognized him. And we started talking, about nothing. He barely said a word. I did most of the talking.

Adult Philippe: What did you talk about?

Lucas: I asked him why. I wanted an explanation. He didn't answer. I asked him if he at least regrets it . He immediately replied, no. "I would regret it if I had a choice. But I had no choice."
(pause) You don't have anything to say?

Adult Philippe: I don't know what to say...it seems very premeditated, the... his leaving. The divorce lawyer, giving up his inheritance...it doesn't seem like a spur of the moment decision.

Lucas: Maybe not. **(A moment)** You know, I wondered sometimes if he didn't go to you, to live with you. Romantic, isn't it? Now I know he didn't. **(pause)** After his funeral I had to empty out his house. I found letters in one of his drawers.

Adult Philippe: You read them.

Lucas: I did. Yes. And after I read them I realized that he had left them on purpose. He gave me the explanation I needed to get. Especially the letters he received from some man he'd been in some sort of secret relationship with. In the last letter he wrote an ultimatum, either they come out or they break up. He doesn't want to hide anymore. It was sent right before my dad moved back to Cherente. He didn't give in to his threat. He left. **(pause. He pulls out a letter)** I also found this letter. The envelope was bare, no name or address. It was written in the summer of 1984. It was meant for you.

Adult Philippe: Did you read that one too?

Lucas: That's why I wanted us to meet. To give it to you. **(Hands him**

the letter) Read it after I leave, okay? That's between you two.
(pause) I'm sorry, but..

Adult Philippe: You should go.

Lucas: Yeah, my flight to California leaves soon. **(Pause)** That's where my home is. I have nothing here now. **(Pause)** And you? You're going to write this story, right? You won't be able to help it.

Adult Philippe: No, I never write about my life.

Lucas: **(Smiles)** That's another one of your lies, isn't it?

Adult Philippe: Do I have your permission? To write about this story?

Lucas: Who am I to stop you.

(They part. A long hug. Lucas exits and stands behind the partition. A recording of him reading the letter)

Thomas (voice over):

Philippe,
I'm about to go to Spain, and I'm not coming back. Not right now, anyway. And you're going to study in Bordeaux, and continue on to other places from there. I always knew you

belonged in other places. So this is where our paths part. I know you wanted things to go differently, for me to say the right things to put you at ease, but I didn't know what to say. I could never talk like you could.

At the end of the day, I tell myself- you felt it. There was love there, clearly. And tomorrow it's going to hurt. But we can't go on with it, you have your whole life waiting for you, and me, I won't change.

I just wanted to write and tell you that I was happy in those months we spent together, that I'd never been that happy, and I know I will never be that happy again.

(Young Philippe enters, begins a loop as the voice over ends, starts from the beginning, writing the opening monologue from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" as the light slowly fades to darkness)

THE END