One night, Pierre (Daniel Auteuil) will share his most painful secret with his daughter-in-law Chloé (Florence Loiret Caille) who’s just been left by her husband. A secret that has been haunting him for 20 years and defines the man he’s now, for the best and the worst. A secret love for Mathilde (Marie-Josée Croze), the woman he did not choose to follow, choosing instead a more comfortable path. One night, we’ll know the life of a man who didn’t dare.
How did you find your way into Anna Gavalda’s novel?

Memory gave me the starting point to my filming of the story. It was like a door through which I got into it. One of the shots actually shows a door: going through that door you find yourself in the very middle of Pierre (Daniel Auteuil)’s present life and you head off into the memory of his love story with Mathilde (Marie-Josée Croze). His past calls him, invites him to recount it, concretely, personified by his young Chinese colleague who opens the door to Pierre’s murky present. We slip between the past and the present several times. Slip, not leap. The story within the story appealed to me as a director, having a minor tale embedded in the main one. We travel from the Pierre of the past with Mathilde to the Pierre of the present who tells his story to Chloé. Mathilde can cross a street in Hong Kong and complete her trajectory by passing Chloé in the living room of the family chalet. “Just like that,” gently, like snippets of memory, a tail of a comet. The film is shaped along that line. Like Russian dolls.

Yet the audience doesn’t know that when the film starts

That’s right – the character you all thought was the main one is dismissed, and it changes. Normally a director is not meant to do that! – and that’s exactly why you want to do it. At first Chloé is the main character but Pierre, through his narrative presence and physique within the frame, will slowly become the main subject. Chloé is totally devastated and little by little Pierre asserts himself over her. He does not mean to cure her, but to lead her to consider there is a way out. It is not true that all is over, that everything is doomed. There is something else, like a new dawn.

How does this film compare with the two previous ones?

Telling a new love story is quite a challenge. There is only one important issue: how to give it the ring of truth. How can you believe it? The memory that breaks into Pierre’s present, now, twenty years later, I didn’t want to make a tableau of it. I wanted it to appear like a vibrating memory that suddenly comes to life so that Chloé gets her place back. When you see him at work, the scenes are improvised, definitely realistic. I was keen on that. Things must just happen, I thought. I don’t want anything to look contrived. If it is true when he works, then the whole thing is true. My last film had a very strong and accurate architecture, a deeply thought-out, extremely tight framework. This time the shooting, I decided, had to be different: shouldered camera, more fragile, more uncertain, wider angles. At times it was scary and I never felt so nervous during shooting.
I thought I didn’t have the right to film the wrong way, to make the actors uneasy, they were so incredible. I think I allowed myself to be in the shoes of the audience sometimes, to be like a simple spectator to give my actors more leeway.

And it feels it allowed them to do rare things there is such disquieting turmoil in Daniel Auteuil. I asked him to go deeper still, and at times I hardly dared ask him. Sometimes a glance said it all. He was so open, so available. He accepted being thrown off balance. And even if I had spelled out strong directions at rehearsal time, the camera allowed absolute moments of freedom, and he, too, could escape into something more genuine. Then he felt really free to bring in the open emotions from deep inside himself. When at rehearsal time, the camera allowed absolute moments of freedom, and she, too, could escape into something more genuine. Then she felt really free to bring in the open emotions from deep inside herself. When I first met her, I thought: she is very pretty but I soon realized there was something about her, something quite entralling. You don’t really know where she comes from. I like that a lot, when you meet people in the street, you know they don’t belong here - the way they walk, the way they are, the looks on their faces, it gives them away. You just know. But you don’t know when it comes to Marie-Josée Croze. You just know she does not belong here. She is different. She is beautiful, with that peculiar look in her eye, and a very dark side. It was ideal for Mathilde, a “real woman”. She is in her thirties, is strong in a very individualistic kind of way. There is the impression of solitude about her, but no sadness. She is self-contained, somewhat alone in front of the world, but she is fine. She has a dignified beauty, and that dark look of hers. The look in these women’s eyes is important. Chloé is very much of a listener and a viewer - she is very active. She has a very spatial way. There is the impression of solitude about her, but no sadness. She is self-contained, somewhat alone in front of the world, but she is fine. She has a dignified beauty, and that dark look of hers.

I talked with Michel Arzouman, the chief cameraman, about that spot of light in the eyes. These are great stories of love and sorrow. You cry, you listen: the eye is incredibly present. Take Chloé’s character, people tend to think that when an actor does not talk, he or she does not play. Therefore what you need is intensity. Florence (Lorel Caille) has that mystery around her; during the audition and make-up tests, she was the only one to play, straight away. She was Chloé in the chateau. The strange thing is that she looks so frail and yet she made her presence felt so much. I don’t know where she gets that from. Even on the movie set where it was all very noisy, her power of concentration was such that she imposed silence. No one talked anymore. She did not walk; she gave the impression of sliding along rather, there was no noise anywhere.

It is a movie about choice? Definitely, yes. Pierre spells it out: “the question is do we have the right to make the wrong choice?” At one point, he did not choose and what you do or do not do may well have more serious consequences than what you actually do. Can we harm other people’s lives simply by staying and giving up on the movie set where it was all very noisy, her power of concentration was such that she imposed silence. No one talked anymore. She did not walk; she gave the impression of sliding along rather, there was no noise anywhere. You cry, you listen: the eye is incredibly present. Take Chloé’s character, people tend to think that when an actor does not talk, he or she does not play. Therefore what you need is intensity. Florence (Lorel Caille) has that mystery around her; during the audition and make-up tests, she was the only one to play, straight away. She was Chloé in the chateau. The strange thing is that she looks so frail and yet she made her presence felt so much. I don’t know where she gets that from. Even on the movie set where it was all very noisy, her power of concentration was such that she imposed silence. No one talked anymore. She did not walk; she gave the impression of sliding along rather, there was no noise anywhere.

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PIERRE FILMOGRAPHY

2009 Someone I loved by Zabou Breitman
2007 MR 73 by Olivier Marchal
2007 The second wind by Alain Corneau
2007 Conversations with My Gardener by Jean Becker
2005 Hidden by Michael Haneke
2004 To Paint or make love by Arnaud and Jean-Marie Larrieu
2004 Department 36 by Olivier Marchal
MARIE-JOSÉE CROZE

MATILDE

FILMOGRAPHY

2008 Someone I loved by Zabou Breitman
2007 Love me no more by Jean Becker
2006 The diving bell and the butterfly by Julian Schnabel
2005 Munich by Steven Spielberg
2005 Tell no one by Guillaume Canet
2003 The Barbarian Invasions by Denys Arcand

Cannes Film Festival Winner: Best Actress
FLORENCE LOIRET CAILLE

FILMOGRAPHY
2008  Someone I loved by Zabou Breitman
2007  Let it rain by Agnès Jaoui
2006  J’attends quelqu’un by Jérôme Bonnell
2004  Une aventure by Xavier Giannoli
2004  To paint or make love by Annaut and Jean-Marie Larrieu

Official Selection - Cannes Film Festival 2005
CASTING
PIERRE  Daniel AUTEUIL
MATHILDE  Marie-Josée CROZE
CHLOE  Florence LOIRET CAILLE
SUZANNE  Christiane MILLET
GENEVIEVE  Geneviève MNICH
CHRISTINE  Olivia ROSS
MONSIEUR XING  Winston ONG

BEHIND THE CAMERA
Scenario  Zabou BREITMAN
Based on Anna Gavalda’s novel
Published by  Agnès DE SACY
SOMEONE I LOVED: Le Dilettante
Set designer  Zabou BREITMAN
Micheł AMATHIEU
Les versailles
Mechanical FX  François EMMANUELLI
Digital FX  L’EST - Christian GUILLON
Producers  BABE FILMS - Fabio CONVERSI (Romanzo Criminale)
Coproducers  BANANA FILMS PRODUCTIONS
INDIGO FILM
Shooting locations  France, Belgium, Hong Kong