



CHIMERA

BY ANDREW KABERLINE

17 years ago,

Mallory ran away from home and created a new identity, **June**.

Now she finds herself returning to the life she left behind to confront a **mysterious doppelgänger** who's assumed her old identity.

GENRES

Domestic Thriller / Supernatural Horror

chi·me·ra

/kī'mirə, kə'mirə/

a fire-breathing female monster with a lion's head,
a goat's body, and a serpent's tail; a shapeshifter.

a thing that is hoped or wished for, but in fact
is illusory or impossible to achieve.



SYNOPSIS

June Peterson has an idyllic homelife in Ottawa with her kind husband and daughters. Her husband's family treats her as one of their own, but June, notably, has no additional family to speak of. She is busy with a handmade crafts business... yet she's careful – No Etsy page, no website, no social media. That's because June was born **Mallory Carroll**, a secret only she knows.

June's world unravels when she picks up a copy of *The Washington Post* and reads a headline: **KIDNAPPED ROANOKE GIRL FOUND AFTER 17 YEAR ABSENCE**. The missing persons photo below is June, but with fair hair and mismatched eyes. Mallory Carroll. Terrified, June contemplates warning her sister, **Lila**, about this interloper through the mail, but fears compromising her life in Canada.

After crafting an excuse to leave town for a few days, June resurrects a previous alias "Francine Dykstra", using a fake ID. She crosses the border and drives to Roanoke, Virginia. Parked outside her childhood home, June sees her old family for the first time in 17 years: her mother **Beatrice**, Lila, and **Brian**, Lila's newborn son. And then, there's "**Mallory**" – an uncanny reflection of June.

June runs into **Wally**, her high school boyfriend. Wally, believing June to be Mallory, is overjoyed, but June's reception to him is guarded. June learns Wally is the town pariah, due to suspicions over his involvement in Mallory's disappearance.

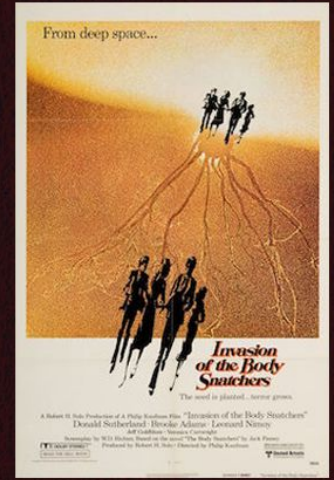
That night, June tries to sneak into her childhood house to warn Lila but is forced to hide in the backyard and witnesses Mallory displaying strange ritualistic behavior that ends in her hand spontaneously catching fire. June flees the scene but in her haste, drops her wallet.

Local police officer **Luke** (also Wally's brother) and his superior **Edwards** make a startling discovery about the alleged kidnapper's remains – his DNA matches almost 100 different missing persons, including Mallory. Luke suggests treating Mallory as a suspect, while Edwards opts for a more cautious approach.

Beatrice and Mallory come to Wally's electronics store, revealing to him that there are two Mallorys. June convinces Wally of her authenticity and discloses that she ran away 17 years ago, though she won't tell him why. She shows him the letter, prompting Wally to suggest a delivery while the house is empty. The attempt leads to chaos and a police chase. Beatrice's plan to showcase Mallory to local news at the women's shelter she operates ends in disaster when the Mallory attacks a resident named Jasmine. Edwards orders Luke to bring Wally in as the suspect of the break-in. Despite Luke's protests, he reluctantly complies and warns Wally to leave town.

Wally takes Mallory on a date, allowing June (disguised as Mallory) a chance to speak with Lila. However, Beatrice's interference limits June's time with her sister. Mallory manipulates Wally, sowing doubt about June. Luke discovers Jasmine's DNA matches the kidnapper. Luke storms to the Carroll house and accosts June, urging her to reveal the truth. Edwards suspends Luke for this outburst. At a tense dinner, Beatrice reveals she has the Francine ID and exposes the kidnapping story as a lie. June returns to Wally's place to find Mallory has convinced him that she is real, casting June as the imposter.

Deadly confrontations ensue as June and Mallory's worlds collide. Mallory reveals herself as something other than human. June must address the reason she abandoned her old life and finds herself in a fight to keep her new one.



COMPARATIVE

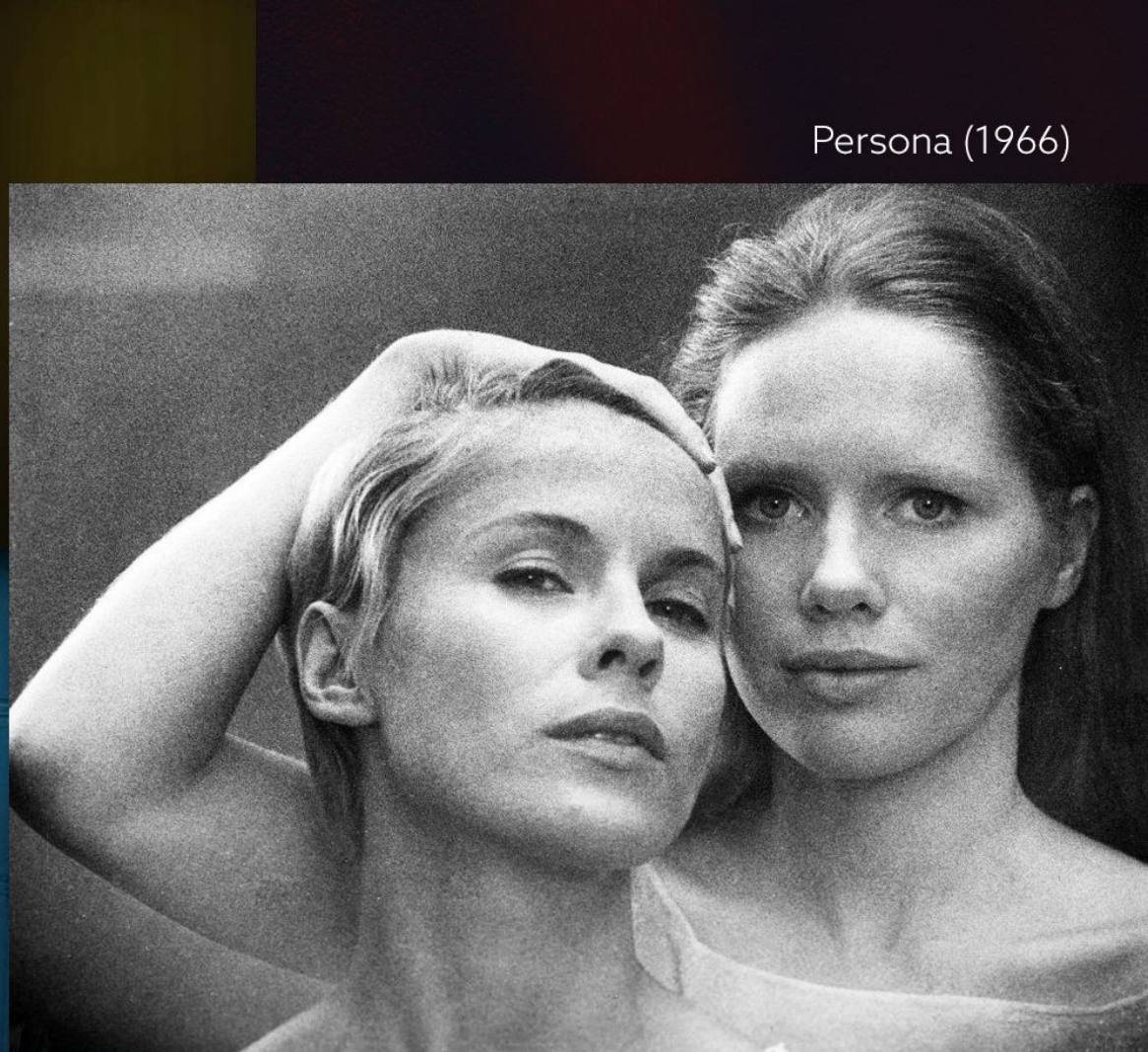
from << **grounded** to **otherworldly** >>



Black Swan (2010)



Enemy (2013)



Persona (1966)



Another Earth (2011)

Carrie (1976)



Bad Times at the El Royale (2018)

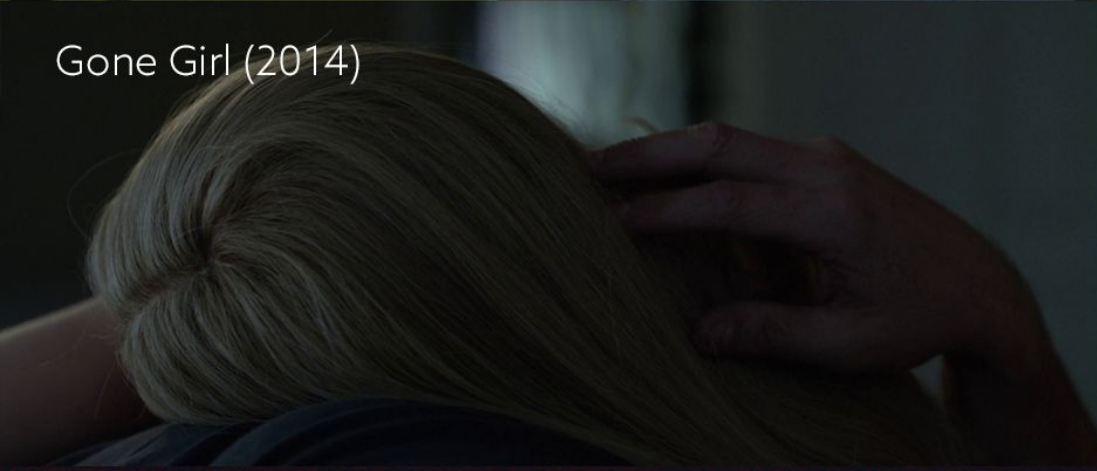
Hereditary (2018)

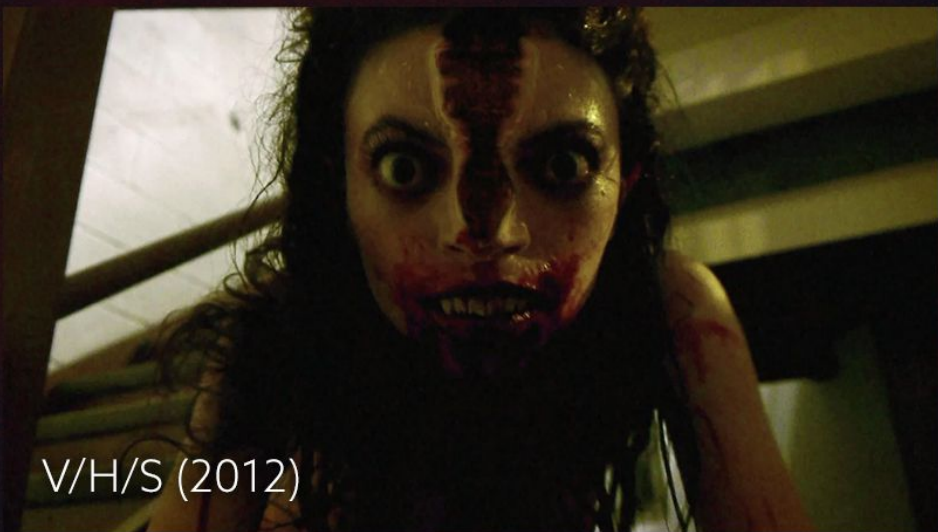


Barton Fink (1991)



Gone Girl (2014)





V/H/S (2012)



Room (2015)



Under the Skin (2013)



Possessor (2020)



Midsommar (2019)



Always Shine (2016)



Vertigo (1958)

JUNE

Careful, industrious, perceptive.

June Peterson was born Mallory Carroll in Roanoke, Virginia. 17 years prior to the start of the film, June fled from home and started a new life in Canada. She is happy there with her husband Earl and their two daughters, Becca and Rachel. She methodically keeps herself undiscoverable and is tight-lipped about her past. However, once she learns of the sudden reappearance of a woman claiming to be Mallory Carroll, June feels compelled to ensure her former family's safety.

June is guarded and may come across as cold or unfriendly to some. She has a strong moral compass and is quick to discern a person's character or intention. Her life has never been easy, yet she's managed to find a new family, full of people who she loves and who love her. June continuously pushes forward through obstacles and hardships, determined to do right, even for those who never did right by her.

The "Mallory" that re-enters the Carroll family isn't Mallory at all. But who, or what, she is isn't clear. Largely silent, this new Mallory continually takes in as much information as she can about her new surroundings. There are a number of signs that she isn't who she appears to be—a lost tooth, a sudden fire, a quick temper—yet those around her can't see past their own feelings about her homecoming.

Mallory appears to be from a different time and place. She has odd, unexplained rituals and superstitions paired with a deep interest in her new sister's infant son. She slithers through encounters with the people who claim to know and love her, assimilating but never to perfection. Not definitively human, she instead provides a blank slate for others to project who they think she should be.

Mysterious, childlike, temperamental.

MALLORY

WALLY

June/Mallory's high school boyfriend. *Wily, boisterous, impetuous.* 17 years after Mallory went missing, Wally lives alone in a small apartment above the electronics store he inherited from his father. He's treated like a pariah by the town as they suspected his involvement in Mallory's disappearance. He has a tense relationship with his brother, Luke, who's always trying to keep him out of trouble. Lacking confidence—but not bravado—Wally turns to self-help books to navigate his place in the world. He is eager to help June when he finds her struggling at a local bar.

BEATRICE

June/Mallory's mother. *Traditional, prickly, shrewd.* After her daughter's disappearance, Beatrice opened a women's shelter in Roanoke—"Mallory's House"—that has always struggled financially. She works with her youngest daughter, Lila, to keep it afloat. Knowing there is something suspicious about Mallory's sudden reappearance, Beatrice sees an opportunity to help her bottom line.

LILA

June/Mallory's younger sister. *Warm, trusting, diplomatic.* Lila is a young, single mother of a one-year-old, **Brian**. She lives and works with her mother, Beatrice. Lila was only a child when Mallory disappeared and now she is happy to welcome her back into her life. Wanting to keep the peace, Lila does her best to alleviate any tension between her mother and Mallory.

LUKE

Wally's older brother, a local cop. *Focused, protective, intuitive.* Luke is a respected police officer, who hopes to work his way up in the force. He sees Mallory's reappearance as a way to not only help him towards that goal, but also to help clear his younger brother, Wally, of any suspicion the town has held against him.

EARL

June's husband. *Loving, spirited, steadfast.* Earl loves June, and does so without asking questions about her past. Together they have two daughters — **Becca** and **Rachel**. Earl is an invested father, husband, son and brother. He is in tune with June's feelings, and tries to push through her distance and evasiveness after she suddenly leaves home.



ABOUT THE WRITER

Andrew Kaberline was born and raised in Virginia and has lived in New York City for close to 10 years. His short screenplay *The Object of My Confections* was the winner of the 2020 ScreenCraft Animation Competition and his short *Dummy* won the 2021 HollyShorts Screenwriting Competition. In partnership with Seattle Film Summit, *Dummy* was produced and had its world premiere on opening night of the 2023 HollyShorts Film Festival at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood.

Andrew also performs script coverage for Particular Crowd, has written multiple plays produced in New York City, and co-created / wrote the popular audio drama podcast *The Grayscale*, which was broadcast on NPR Affiliate WCBE and won the 2016 Serling Award from the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation.

Andrew writes stories that live somewhere on a Venn diagram between “scary” and “heartwarming.” Thematically, he explores memory and nostalgia. He excels at writing surreal horror, heartwarming genre fare, and anxiety-driven nightmares. His dream is to travel back in time so he can get staffed on *The Twilight Zone* or *Gravity Falls*. Influences include Jeff Nichols, Ari Aster, and Wong Kar-wai.

WRITER'S STATEMENT

Chimera is an exploration of the single greatest cause of my anxiety: the push and pull between wanting to go out on my own and wanting to keep close to my family. I'm the lone member of my family who lives in a major city, a different state, more than an hour drive from each other. Because of this self-imposed feeling of being removed, I have an irrational fear that the next time I return home will be the time that I no longer belong there.

Keeping with the tradition of doppelganger films, *Chimera* explores themes like duplicity and reflections – but I also wanted to focus on the horror of what is hidden behind seemingly mundane slice-of-life artifacts. The horror that comes from a family unit full of Catholic guilt where everyone is aware of their issues but never talks about them. In *Chimera*, documents lie, photographs lie, flowerbeds lie, the geography of houses lie. There's a pond in the woods behind the Carroll house but it's a manmade version of nature, a fake. Nearly all the conflict is the result of something lying about what it is on the surface.

I was influenced by a book about the history and process of faking your own death (*Playing Dead* by Elizabeth Greenwood) and an exhibit at The Museum of Jurassic Technology in Culver City titled "Tell the Bees" all about pagan cures, remedies, and traditions. Both greatly shaped the finer details of the world of *Chimera*.

Above all else, what I hope I've accomplished with this script is presenting a surrealistic thriller that doesn't need to explicitly answer the mysteries of "why June ran away" or "where Mallory came from" for an audience to feel spooked, satisfied, and entertained.



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