

OUT OF MY HEAD (FILM)



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Van Cauwelaert's trademark absurdist-existential angst is evident again in this follow-up to his Prix Goncourt-winning debut, *One-Way*. American botanist Martin Harris is relieved to return home after a week-long absence, three days of which he spent in a coma in a Paris hospital following a car accident. What a surprise, then, to discover that his wife of 10 years doesn't recognize him and is now living with another man, a botanist named Martin Harris whose knowledge and memories are identical to the narrator's in every detail. When no one from his former life will vouch for him, Martin starts entertaining unlikely conspiracy theories (adultery, corporate espionage) that are just credible enough to add some real spice to the mystery of his predicament. Feistily questioning his most basic assumptions—Where is memory stored? How authentic are the stories we tell about ourselves? How much of what we cherish about life is based on nostalgia and repetition?—he quickly finds that he "had to stop existing in order to start living." What has been a spirited exploration of identity and memory abruptly turns into a somewhat flimsy thriller in its final pages, but Martin's mighty struggle with self-doubt, paranoia and the disorienting freedom of losing his place in the world makes the ride well worth it.