

THE PROTEUS EFFECT by Andy Froemke

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Title: The Proteus Effect

Genre: SciFi/Thriller

Logline: An eccentric software genius develops a program to digitally rewrite his past to transform himself into a more perfect man, only to discover the darker side of his nature is corrupting the file.

Tagline: "He wanted to create the perfect man... he created the perfect monster."



The tone is David Fincher's *THE GAME* meets *EX MACHINA*.

This is a stylized techno-thriller with a dark, brooding quality with a slow burn that builds to a boiling point before things explode. Embracing VR technology, this project is a natural for digital marketing.

"The Proteus Effect is a very well told story with a beautiful, dark tone and believable characters... It offers a fresh adaptation of a story we all know that is looking into the future, not the past... the writing is great... Graves, the man, the mystery, is a cunning antagonist which inspires just as much fear as intrigue. His character is flawless and the darkness he reveals within Henry as this manipulative, murderous lover is one of the most interesting reveals in this spiraling plot."

(Verdict: Recommend) — Talentville Professional Coverage Staff

HENRY MACKLIN (Jude Law type), a computer genius whose extreme ideas about technology have placed him on the fringe of the computer world, has isolated himself in a mansion outside London. Together, with his lover and programming partner MARGARET POOLE (Lauren Cohan type), he works on a revolutionary software program called *Proteus*, which has the ability to rewrite painful memories and limiting beliefs... in essence transforming a person into their best self. The project is nearly ready to be tested.

When GABRIEL JOHN UTTERSON (Clive Owen type), Henry's emotionally repressed lawyer and longtime friend, is summoned to assist with a provision to Henry's will, he is disconcerted to learn Henry's entire estate is to be signed over to a mysterious man named EDWARD GRAVES (Daniel Radcliffe type). Utterson's concern grows when Graves gets into a car accident nearly crippling a little girl and Henry pays off the family to keep the police out of it. When Poole is nearly raped by Graves, Utterson confronts Henry about the growing danger. Despite Utterson's warnings and Poole's worries, Henry refuses to cut ties with Graves, convinced he's the key to *Proteus*.

As competitors circle around the technology and make attempts to steal it, Henry becomes increasingly paranoid and secretive. Poole turns to Utterson for help. Their conversation reveals Utterson's long repressed feelings for Poole. Pushing that aside, Utterson focuses his attention on Graves. He becomes obsessed with uncovering the identity of Graves and discovering the hold he has on Henry. Eventually,

the two meet clandestinely and Utterson reluctantly gives up a device Henry's entrusted to him in exchange for learning what Graves is using to blackmail Henry. He discovers Henry had Poole's husband killed.

While Utterson is still processing this bombshell, one of Henry's old friends who's been trying to steal the *Proteus* secrets turns up dead, the victim of a hit and run. All the signs point to Graves, who has vanished. Henry, greatly disturbed by this turn of events, informs Utterson that his relationship with Graves is over.

But Henry's behavior becomes increasingly erratic. Poole asks Utterson to intervene. He suggests Henry see someone about his unstable state. Instead, Henry seeks out an old business partner who had betrayed him and taken over the company they had co-founded. Henry is surprised to learn that his old friend knows exactly what Henry's been working on and intends to take over the *Proteus* project. Angered, Henry transforms into Graves and attempts to download himself into his nemesis. He's unsuccessful and leaves his ex-partner dead.

Called to the crime scene, Utterson begins to suspect Henry's involvement in the murders. He rushes to Henry's house, but he's too late. Henry shoots himself, unable to live with what he's created. As he lay dying, the truth behind *Proteus* is revealed... Henry is Graves. In attempting to find his better angel, he unleashed his inner demon.

Utterson attempts to put the ordeal behind him, but Graves is not dead. Having found refuge in the computer system that created him, he's now looking for a new host. In order to force Utterson to hook up to *Proteus*, Graves electronically drains Utterson's bank account and releases damaging internal documents from his law firm in Utterson's name. When Graves threatens to turn on Poole, Utterson connects to *Proteus* and begins transforming. Under the influence, he reveals to Poole Henry's secret that shatters her.

As *Proteus* surges through Utterson's veins, he gets into a car and threatens to run down Poole. She takes aim at him with her gun. At the last minute, he veers into a canal and his car submerges. Utterson's childhood tragedy begins replaying as he sinks down. Poole, fighting her own personal demons and painful memories, reaches out to Utterson. The connection frees them from the past and stops *Proteus*.