




Dream States



Logline

When a PhD Student researching dreams joins her Professor's enigmatic sleep study, she and the other participants begin to dream of events in their own futures. By trying to understand the reason for their prophetic dreams, while growing closer to her Professor behind closed doors, she unlocks a unique ability to control the future through her dreams.

A person is lying down, covered by a blue blanket, with only their head and shoulders visible. The background is dark, and the lighting is soft, creating a calm and mysterious atmosphere.



Summary

Thea, a PhD student researching the cause and purpose of dreams, immerses her life in her studies. She researches, writes about, and can't stop talking about her desire to discover new horizons in the world of dreams. Her obsessive tendencies aside, it's her frequent discussions with her charismatic Professor, Graham, that prove to be the biggest sticking point for her boyfriend, Dave. Despite trying to take on most of their shared expenses, Dave's tendency to "juggle" leaves them with just 30 days to pay backed rent or face eviction. The offer of a lucrative opportunity for them both to be subjects in Graham's enigmatic study of segmented sleep, which will not only pay the rent but allow Thea to dive even further into her studies, is too perfect to refuse.

In addition to a strict adherence of sleeping in two segments, the study also requires total avoidance of any type of exposure to electricity from sunset to sunrise, much to Dave's chagrin. Graham's mysterious lab, endorsed by an unknown organization, and the fat paycheck given to everyone involved, also peaks Dave's suspicions. But the eclectic handful of study participants prove to be vivid dreamers, much to Thea's excitement.

With Graham's encouragement, she immerses herself even deeper into the world of dreaming, including a promise to unlock the meaning of the other participants dreams, while Dave remains on the doubtful sidelines. When Dave proves unable to subscribe to the study's strict requirements and admits he only every participated in order to keep an eye on Thea and Graham, he is kicked out of the study, and Thea's life, opening the door for her become even closer to Graham.



Soon after, the entire sleep study group makes a startling discovery, they have each dreamt of events in their own lives weeks before they occurred. Graham and Thea secretly team up in an attempt to understand the cause of their prophetic dreams, and end up sharing far more than just each others research. Even after Dave returns to warn Thea of the foreboding discoveries he has made about Graham's past in military intelligence, she refuses to stray the path she has forged with him. As the sexual chemistry between Thea and Graham grows, the line between Thea's dream world and the real world begins to blur.

Thea's dreams soon prove to be more than just prophetic. By controlling what occurred in her dream, she is able to change events in the real world. Driven to discover how Thea has unlocked an unheard of ability to alter the fabric of reality with her dreams, Graham keeps her in the lab after dismissing the others. Graham's real intents for the study, and for Thea, soon emerge; he was searching for someone like her all along, and got close to her only to serve his own obsessive pursuit.

With his intents, and his heartlessness, out in the open, it becomes clear that Graham will stop at nothing to find out what makes Thea's mind so capable, and how to duplicate the results, even if it means holding her captive. Thea plays along through one more night, so she can summon up her new found abilities and conjure up a dream of escape.

During her waking hours in the middle of the night, Thea brings her dream to life, throwing the lab into chaos and fighting back Graham's every attempt to hold on to her. Thea flees, warning Graham not to follow, but he is never far behind. Lost in the chaotic darkness Thea has created with her mind, Graham makes a fatal misstep that brings his pursuit to an end.



Safe and back to her day to day routine, Thea has learned how to move past her own obsessive tendencies, and use her intelligence and energy to benefit others, but with her unique abilities still intact, she can continue to dream up any future she chooses.





Dream States is....

Far from backwards talking conversations in a red room, *Dream States* presents real dream environments and scenarios, engrossing the audience through experiences they will have shared in their own dreams.

From impossible architecture to daunting natural environments, the inner worlds that *Dream States* explores are more than just visually stunning, they have texture, shape, and convey the fully immersive experience of having a dream that is vivid, visceral and deeply meaningful.

Rather than sit in stark contrast to the dream sequences, the real world settings of *Dreams States* also have their own surrealistic and dreamlike elements. These scenes bridge a gap, weaving the grounded personal story with the paradoxical dream settings, visually connecting the dramatic theme of the *Dream States* with the exciting worlds the story ventures into.

Dream States is a highly cinematic, yet realistic, exploration of why we experience what we do when we dream.



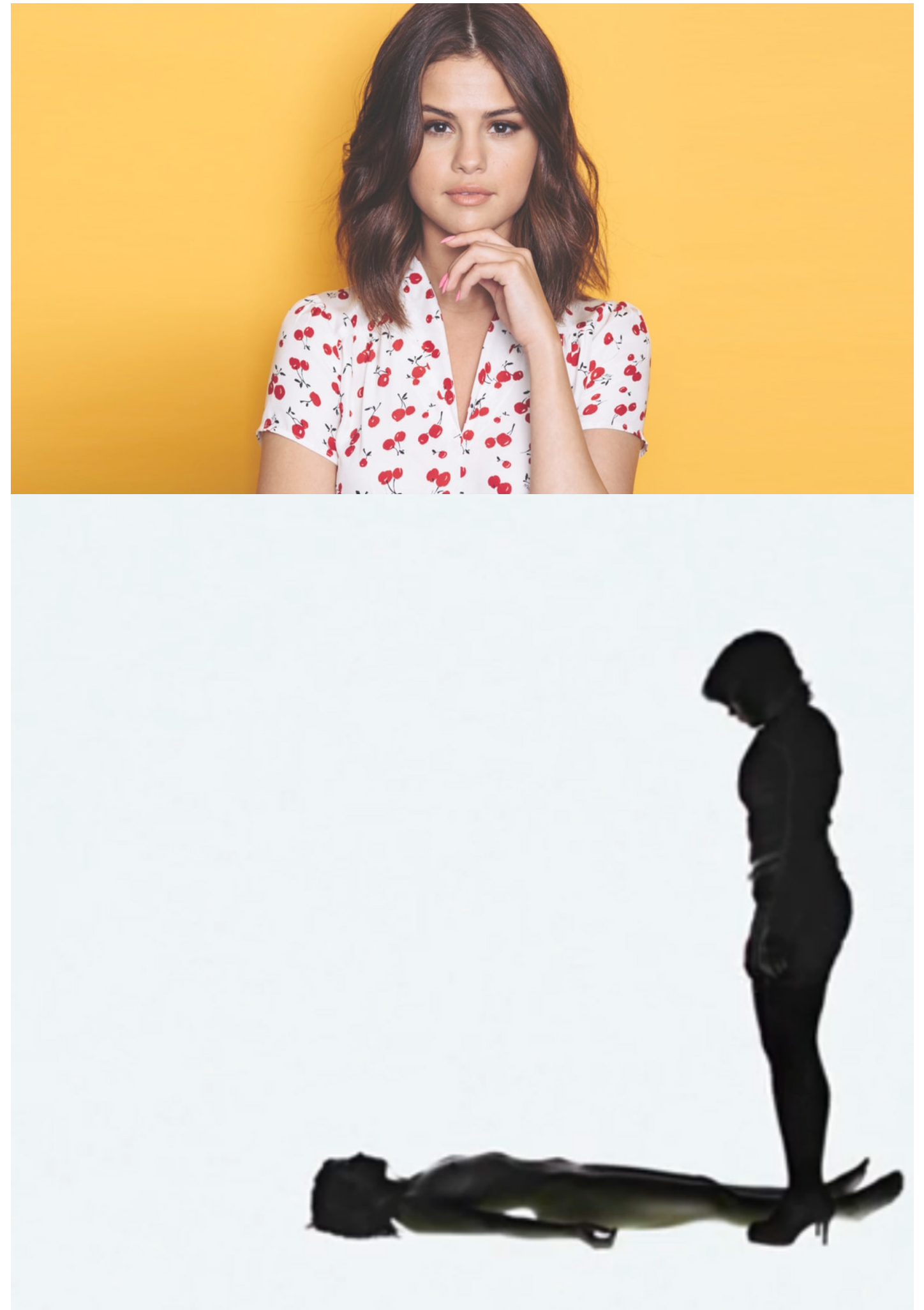


Thea

Thea is a young academic obsessed with trying to understand the purpose of dreaming. She is powerhouse of thought behind childlike features that keep her from being taken as seriously as she ought to be. She is both obsessive and giving, intelligent and naïve, funny and serious. She's a sweet geek, the kind of woman you'd enjoy hanging out with, until she goes off on an academic tangent. Her intellectual pursuits often outweigh all other interests, to the detriment of her relationships. But who hasn't wondered why they experience what they do when they dream? Her flaws and vulnerabilities are traits that she shares with so many people who are always well-meaning, but ultimately blind to what lies beneath the surface. She is a likeable character with relatable flaws, in pursuit of a mystery of the mind that connects and intrigues all of us.

When Graham seems to be the only person who encourages her obsessions, all other connections go out the window. She fully immerses herself in her pursuit, remaining blind to the potential dangers around her; the hidden purpose of the study, the changeable nature of Graham, and an ominous dream she continues to have about him. The more he encourages her involvement, the more their relationship intensifies, and the more obsessive she becomes.

Ultimately, Thea find herself a literal prisoner of Graham's own obsessive pursuit; to understand the unique mental abilities she has managed to unlock, and duplicate the results. Faced with the possibility of becoming his personal lab rat, Thea must overcome the lack of confidence in herself and use her newfound abilities to escape his clutches. Once on the other side of her ordeal, Thea learns how to prioritise more than just her single minded pursuits, with the added bonus of maintaining her uniquely powerful dreams.





Graham

Graham is an intelligent, confident, and charismatic enigma. He's a master of neuroscience, physiology of the brain, and has his own obsessive fascination with the science of sleep. He knows how to work a room, how to talk to anybody, and how to tell them exactly what they want to hear. His respect for intelligence doesn't translate to empathy, though he's good pretending that it does. He has occasion to loose his temper, but usually keeps that behind closed doors. His reputation depends on maintaining an air of control. His past in Military Intelligence is something he willingly talks about, but without sharing too many details. Only those with the highest clearance know what his responsibilities really were.

Thea's obsessive quest to understand dreams aligns with his own. He's naturally drawn to her insight and energy. It doesn't hurt that she's also easy to manipulate. He gets her involved with the study, knowing that she has the potential to achieve his clandestine goal. As her quest grows more obsessive, so too does his. Manipulating her mind through both the study and their relationship, assures his primary subject is constantly under his control.

Graham expects Thea's scientific reasoning, her deep desire to achieve a breakthrough, to outweigh her emotions, just as it does for him. When that doesn't turn out ot be true, he simply assumes that he can overpower her. Graham's underestimation, not just of Thea's physical, but her intellectual and emotional strength, ultimately becomes his downfall.







Theme

The dramatic core of *Dream States* is about falling into an abusive relationship, and ultimately finding the inner strength to overcome it. At the beginning of the story, Thea, though intelligent and independent, is very much someone who bends to other people's wills and desires, and lacks the confidence to push her own wants and needs to the forefront. She easily falls for Graham, seeing him as the only person in her life who encourages and supports her pursuits. Once cut off from her other relationships and fully immersed in her life with Graham, her tunnel vision prevents her from seeing that he is keeping secrets, manipulating her behavior, and using her.

Even as Thea begins to learn how powerful her mind really is, and the more ominous things about Graham and his mysterious study begin to get under her skin, she lacks the confidence to stand up for herself. It's only after Thea realizes that the very strength Graham covets was living within her all along, that she can then use that strength to overcome him.

This theme is also reinforced through the portrayal of some of the moments that commonly occur in abusive situations. At the beginning of the story Graham orders top shelf drinks off Thea's dime, without question or consideration of whether or not she can afford it. He gradually gets closer to her through grooming techniques, offering her things that she can't refuse, manipulating situations which force them together, and subtly undercutting her boyfriend. Once she is fully immersed in a relationship with Graham, he experiences snap changes in mood and uses undermining language to destroy her confidence.

When the abuse reaches the point of become physical, he makes her the responsible party. "I didn't want to have to do that. I promise, I never will again, as long as you cooperate with me." And the moment Thea realizes she has the power to overcome him, comes in tandem with the discovery of her self confidence "I don't need anyone's permission." Even within the surreal atmosphere of *Dream States*, these very real moments keep the theme woven throughout all the other dynamic twists and turns, grounding the story as a relatable and engrossing drama.



Can one simple change in how we live our lives, change us?

We live in a world where people are constantly asking themselves this question. Will this diet make me feel better? Will snoozing twitter reduce my stress? Will quitting my job or moving to the country make me a happier person? We wonder, in different ways throughout our entire lives, if there is some secret formula, some perfect combination of habits that will awaken a stronger, more balanced and more capable inner self.

Dream States proposes that a change in how we engage with the world can change, not only how we think, but what our thoughts make us capable of. We can reach the untapped potential of our minds.





Writer

Margaret M. MacDonald's twenty years of experience spans several roles in the film industry. She has lived and worked in Los Angeles, New York and Sydney. A background in production design has helped her to hone a uniquely visual voice. She writes stories that are character driven, and often infuse more than one genre together, twisting known conventions into films that are both familiar and surprising.

Margaret's work includes a library of spec material and several feature films in various stages of production. She wrote and produced the sci-fi/thriller, *Enter Sanctum*, which was adapted from her award winning script, *The Residents*, to be filmed on the stunning east coast of Tasmania. Her modern Shakespearean comedy, *One Summer Night at the Royal Athenian*, is currently in development under Holly Brisley's Katana Films. She has also written on assignment and in collaboration with several Australian production companies, creating scripts across a range of genres.

Margaret has directed several short films, including Sydney's entry into The New York Shakespeare Exchange's Sonnet Project International. She plans to direct her first feature in the near future. She is also currently writing a sci-fi/fantasy novel series inspired by her award winning screenplay, *The Phoenix Effect*, under a publication contract with Oghma Creative Media in the United States.

Margaret loves to tell stories that transport people into other worlds, and help to make this one a little more extraordinary.

Dream States is inspired by Margaret's tendency to have extremely vivid dreams, and her minor obsession with the mysteries of the mind. Along the way it became a metaphor for her own experience in an abusive relationship. *Dream States*, though wrapped in an exciting sci-fi/thriller package, portrays this journey with a depth of realism and honesty that will resonate with audience members who have shared or are sharing a similar experience. She hopes that by watching Thea discover her inner strength and overcome her abuser, those viewers who are struggling with their own vulnerability will find the confidence to be able to do the same.



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An underwater photograph showing light rays filtering down from the surface, creating a serene blue environment with many small bubbles and particles suspended in the water.

Thank
You