

CALIBRATION

Pitch Deck

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CONFIDENTIAL

THE LOGLINE

A geneticist secretly modifies his unborn son's genome — creating the first superhuman, and the man the world will spend twenty-four years trying to control, replicate, and ultimately destroy.

Format: 8-episode limited series (50-65 min each) **Genre:** Science fiction thriller / literary drama **Tone:** *Chernobyl* meets *Watchmen* — institutional failure as human tragedy **Rating:** TV-MA (violence, intensity, language)

WHY NOW

- **CRISPR is in the headlines.** Gene editing won the Nobel Prize in 2020. CRISPR therapies are FDA-approved. The question "What if someone went further?" is no longer science fiction — it's next Tuesday.
- **Superhero deconstruction is the moment.** *The Boys*, *Watchmen*, *Invincible* proved audiences want the genre interrogated, not celebrated. CALIBRATION takes the interrogation further: what if there were no costume, no villain, no mission — just a man too strong for the world?
- **Prestige limited series are the dominant form.** *Chernobyl*, *When They See Us*, *Band of Brothers* proved that a single, self-contained story told with literary ambition can dominate cultural conversation. CALIBRATION is built for this format.
- **The source material has built-in awareness.** Philip Wylie's *Gladiator* (1930) is almost certainly the novel that inspired Superman. This is the first serious adaptation of the original story — the tragedy that DC turned into a power fantasy.

THE STORY

Act I — WHAT HE IS (Episodes 1-2)

Hugo Danner is born in 2002 to a geneticist who secretly modified his genome in utero. By age five, Hugo can crush wood with his hands and break other children's bones with a casual touch. His parents teach him calibration — the constant, conscious modulation of force that will define every moment of his life. At ten, he demolishes a bully's fort with his bare hands and is pulled from school. At fifteen, he survives a gunshot. At eighteen, he enters CU Boulder, walks on to the football team, and for eighteen months lives the closest thing to a normal life he'll ever have. Then his calibration slips during a tackle, and he paralyzes a quarterback on national television.

Act II — WHAT HE DOES (Episodes 3-4)

Hugo vanishes. Two years of manual labor — oil rigs, fishing boats, construction — hiding what he is. In Tahiti, he discovers the ocean: the one place where his full capability has no consequences. A DIA officer named Catherine Lyle finds him and offers purpose: classified military operations where his abilities are assets, not liabilities. Hugo deploys to Syria and becomes the most effective special operator in American history. But Lyle isn't just using Hugo — she's studying him. Every blood draw, every tissue biopsy feeds PROMETHEUS, a \$183 million program to replicate the modification.

Act III — WHAT THEY WANT (Episodes 5-6)

Hugo discovers PROMETHEUS — twelve human embryos modified with an incomplete version of his father's cascade, gestating in artificial wombs, dying slowly because the protocol is incomplete. A geneticist named Raya Patel, assigned as Hugo's medical monitor, becomes his lover and his window into the program's true nature. When Raya tries to leak the program, she's caught. Hugo is confined. The institutional machinery that promised him belonging reveals its true purpose: Hugo is not a person. He is a capability to be reproduced.

Act IV — WHAT HE BECOMES (Episodes 7-8)

Hugo escapes. He drives to Fort Detrick and systematically destroys PROMETHEUS — the servers, the samples, the embryos (which are dying and cannot be saved). He drives west to Colorado, to the mountains where he was made. His father dies in federal custody. The bone growth that is the modification's biological ticking clock reaches his spine. A SOF team with a thermobaric bomb finds him in the meadow where he trained as a child. Hugo could fight. He could kill every operator and outrun every helicopter. Instead, he stands still. Fighting would prove their thesis — that he is defined by his capabilities. His refusal to fight is his first fully autonomous act. The bomb falls. The meadow becomes glass.

Final image: A graduate student opens a fireproof box recovered from the ruins. Inside: a notebook containing the complete modification protocol. The question is still open.

WHAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT

Other Superhuman Shows	CALIBRATION
Costumed heroes and villains	A man in jeans and a t-shirt
Superpowers as spectacle	Abilities as burden and isolation
Action set pieces	Character study with violence
Villains want to destroy the world	Institutions want to replicate one man
The hero saves the day	The hero is destroyed by the world
Science as handwaving	Real CRISPR biology with one fictional leap

THE HOOK STRUCTURE

Episode 1 ends with: *Hugo demolishes the fort. A video goes viral. Abednego pulls him from school.*

Episode 2 ends with: *Hugo paralyzes Kensington. He runs 180 miles in four hours. "Never again."*

Episode 3 ends with: *Lyle sits down in a Tahiti bar and says Hugo's name. "You're looking for a*

purpose." **Episode 4** ends with: *Hugo visits his father. "Someone is trying to do it again." Lyle has the*

journal. **Episode 5** ends with: *Hugo sees the artificial wombs. Four fetuses, dying. Lyle: "Get me the*

complete protocols." **Episode 6** ends with: *Raya is caught. Hugo is confined. Lyle: "He's a national*

security asset. Treat him accordingly." **Episode 7** ends with: *Hugo shuts down the last artificial womb.*

"No one will ever do this again." **Episode 8** ends with: *The notebook. The cipher. The question is still open.*

VISUAL IDENTITY

- **Childhood sequences (Eps 1-2):** Warm, naturalistic, Terrence Malick influence. Colorado light. Mountains. The beauty of isolation.
- **College/football (Ep 2):** Handheld, kinetic, *Friday Night Lights* energy. Crowd noise. Stadium lights. The world Hugo briefly belongs to.
- **Drift years (Ep 3):** Wide, lonely compositions. Oil rigs against flat sky. Ocean blue. Dwarfed by landscape.
- **Military/DIA (Eps 3-5):** Cold, institutional, *Zero Dark Thirty* palette. Fluorescent labs. Secure corridors. The architecture of control.
- **Fort Detrick/embryos (Eps 5-7):** Clinical horror. Soft lighting on artificial wombs. Monitors beeping. The uncanny valley of manufactured life.
- **Final act (Ep 8):** Return to Colorado light. Wide mountain vistas. Hugo alone in the meadow. The most beautiful location in the series is where he dies.

AUDIENCE

Primary: Adults 25-54. Fans of *Chernobyl*, *Watchmen*, *The Boys*, *Dark*, *Severance*. **Secondary:** Hard-SF readers. Bioethics audience. Superhero deconstruction fans who want the concept treated as literature. **Crossover:** Military thriller audience (*Homeland*, *The Americans*, *Zero Dark Thirty*) — CALIBRATION is a military thriller wrapped in science fiction.

COMPARABLE PROJECTS — PERFORMANCE

Title	Platform	Result
<i>Chernobyl</i>	HBO	8M viewers/ep, 19 Emmy noms, universal acclaim
<i>Watchmen</i>	HBO	Most-watched new HBO series of 2019, 26 Emmy noms
<i>The Boys</i>	Prime Video	Top 3 most-watched Prime original, 5 seasons
<i>3 Body Problem</i>	Netflix	37M views in first 4 weeks, renewed
<i>Invincible</i>	Prime Video	Critical and commercial success, 3 seasons

Dark	Netflix	Germany's most-watched Netflix original, 3 seasons
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THE MARKETING HOOK

"The novel that inspired Superman — finally told as the tragedy it always was."

This is not a superhero origin story. It is the anti-origin story — the version where the powers don't save anyone, the world doesn't need saving, and the man who could do anything is destroyed because the world can't tolerate greatness it doesn't control.

SERIES POTENTIAL

CALIBRATION is a complete, self-contained story. Hugo Danner is born, lives, and dies within eight episodes. The ending is not a cliffhanger — it is a definitive, emotionally devastating conclusion.

However: the epilogue plants a seed. A notebook containing the complete modification protocol survives. The question — *what does the world do with the knowledge that someone like Hugo was possible?* — remains open. If audience demand warrants continuation, the world supports it.

Zero IP complications. Public domain source. Clean chain of title.

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