

# **CALIBRATION**

Series Bible

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# FORMAT & STRUCTURE

**Episodes:** 8 **Runtime:** 50-65 minutes each **Total Runtime:** ~8 hours (480 minutes) **Rating:** TV-MA (violence, intensity, language, brief sexuality) **Shooting Format:** Digital, 2.39:1 anamorphic widescreen **Genre:** Science fiction thriller / literary drama **Source Material:** *Gladiator* by Jeremy Salsburg (novel, 2026), inspired by Philip Wylie's 1930 public-domain classic

## Episode Breakdown

Ep	Title	Primary Location	Climax
1	Modification	Estes Park, CO — Danner home / garage lab	Hugo demolishes fort; viral video; pulled from school
2	Calibration	CU Boulder / Stadium	Hugo paralyzes Kensington; runs 180 miles into the mountains
3	Drift	Permian Basin / Dubai / Tahiti	Catherine Lyle appears in a Tahiti bar; Hugo says yes
4	Weapon	Fort Bragg / Syria / Estes Park	Hugo discovers DIA subpoenaed his father's journal; Lyle is replicating him
5	Prometheus	Fort Detrick / Syria	Hugo sees the artificial wombs; Lyle orders complete protocols from his son
6	Protocols	Fort Detrick / Virginia facility	Raya's betrayal exposed; Hugo confined
7	Escape	Virginia / Estes Park / Fort Detrick	Hugo destroys PROMETHEUS; shuts down embryos one by one
8	Threshold	Colorado mountains / Epilogue montage	Thermobaric strike; the notebook survives

## WORLD RULES

### The One Fictional Leap

The fourteen-gene CRISPR-Cas9 cascade is the single speculative technology. Each individual gene edit is achievable with current CRISPR technology. The fictional leap is simultaneous integration of all fourteen modifications via a custom AAV vector — the cascade working as a system rather than

individual edits.

Parameter	Value
Technology base	Real CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing
Fictional advance	Simultaneous 14-gene cascade integration via custom AAV vector
Individual edits	All achievable with current biotech (MSTN, ACTN3, COL1A1, etc.)
The impossible part	Getting all 14 to work together without cascading failure
Creator	One man, working alone, in a garage laboratory
Replication attempts	PROMETHEUS spent \$183M and 3 years. Produced 12 embryos. All died.

**What the modification is NOT:** Not magic. Not radiation. Not a serum. It is precise genetic engineering — the same science that produced CRISPR therapies already FDA-approved. The leap is in scale and integration, not in kind.

**Failure modes are real:** Incomplete cascade produces enhanced muscles without connective tissue support, runaway bone growth, organ failure. The PROMETHEUS embryos die because the protocol is missing four critical targets and the timing sequence. The modification also contains a biological ticking clock: the BMP2/SOST feedback loop can produce osteosarcoma under prolonged stress.

## The Rule of One

One fictional leap. Everything downstream is calculated from real biology. If a writer proposes a capability for Hugo, the question is: "Does this require a second fictional leap?" If yes, Hugo cannot do it.

Hugo cannot fly. Hugo cannot shoot energy from his hands. Hugo cannot regenerate severed limbs. Hugo cannot survive a thermobaric bomb. He is enhanced, not supernatural.

## TONE GUIDE

### Core References

Reference	What We Take
<b>Chernobyl</b> (2019)	Institutional machinery that destroys individuals through procedure. The whistleblower punished for being right. The banality of catastrophic decisions.
<b>Watchmen</b> (2019)	Superhuman capability as burden, not fantasy. The deconstruction of the power myth. The question of what it costs to be extraordinary.

<b>The Boys</b> (2019-)	The institutional exploitation of superhuman assets. Corporate/government entities that view people as capabilities to be managed.
<b>First Reformed</b> (2017)	Existential weight carried in stillness. A protagonist consumed by a question that has no answer. Minimal score. Long takes.

## What This Show Is

- A character study disguised as science fiction. Hugo Danner is the subject. The world is the cage.
- A meditation on calibration — the constant, conscious effort required to exist in a world not built for what you are.
- An institutional thriller where the institution wins. Hugo destroys PROMETHEUS. They promote Lyle. The notebook survives. The cycle continues.
- A tragedy in the classical sense: a man destroyed not by his flaws but by his virtues. Hugo's gentleness is what makes him controllable. His refusal to fight is what gets him killed.

## What This Show Is Not

- A superhero show. There is no costume, no villain, no mission, no team.
- An action series. Violence exists but is brief, consequential, and never choreographed for spectacle.
- A franchise launcher. Hugo dies. The story is complete. The epilogue plants a seed, not a sequel.
- A revenge fantasy. Hugo never gets even. The world is not corrected.

# VISUAL LANGUAGE

## Four Worlds, Four Grammars

Environment	Camera	Palette	Light	Sound
<b>Childhood (Estes Park)</b>	Handheld, intimate, Terrence Malick naturalism	Gold-green forest, gray stone, warm wood	Colorado mountain light — warm, filtered through pines	Wind, birdsong, the distant crack of Hugo throwing boulders
<b>College (CU Boulder)</b>	Handheld, kinetic, <i>Friday Night Lights</i> energy	Stadium lights, campus green, dorm fluorescent	Athletic spectacle: stadium floods, locker room harsh	Crowd noise, helmet impacts, the silence after the spine breaks
<b>Drift (exile years)</b>	Wide, lonely, landscape-dominant	Permian rust, Dubai gold, Tahiti blue-green	Varied: harsh oil-rig industrial, Dubai sodium-vapor, Tahiti equatorial	Machinery, ocean, the ambient noise of places where no one knows your name

<b>Institutional (DIA/Fort Detrick)</b>	Locked-off, symmetrical, Kubrickian	Steel gray, fluorescent white, clinical green	Flat institutional lighting — nowhere to hide	HVAC hum, boot steps on linoleum, the mechanical breath of controlled environments
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## What We Show vs. What We Don't Show

We Show	We Don't Show
Hugo's calibration as constant effort — the tightened jaw, the measured grip, the deliberate slowness	Hugo casually tossing cars or leaping buildings. His capability is implied by his restraint, not demonstrated by spectacle.
The USC tackle in real time — three-tenths of a second, one hit, the sound of vertebrae	A slow-motion replay, multiple angles, dramatic scoring. It happens. It's over. The silence of 53,750 people IS the effect.
The artificial wombs — small, clinical, monitors beeping, fetuses visible through translucent walls	Horror-movie fetus closeups. The clinical normalcy is worse than any grotesquerie.
Hugo shutting down the wombs one at a time — same calibrated touch he uses for everything fragile	A rampage through the facility. Hugo does not rage. He acts with precision. The gentleness IS the devastation.
The thermobaric detonation from Hugo's POV — the meadow, the mountains, the heat, then white	A dramatic action-movie explosion from multiple angles. One shot. One man. One bomb. White.

## TIMELINE

Year	Event	Episode
2001	Abednego injects Anna with the 14-gene cascade (gestational week 11)	Ep 1
2002	Hugo born, January 14, Estes Park, CO (11 lbs 4 oz)	Ep 1
2007	Tyler Reeves incident — Hugo breaks a boy's arm at age five	Ep 1
2008-2012	Calibration curriculum; fort demolition; viral video; pulled from school	Ep 1
2016	Hugo survives accidental gunshot at age fifteen	Ep 2
2017	Hugo reads Abednego's journal; confronts father about Anna	Ep 2

2019	Hugo walks on to CU Boulder football; meets Marcus Webb, Elena Navarro	Ep 2
2020	USC game: Hugo paralyzes Trey Kensington; runs 180 miles	Ep 2
2021-2023	Exile: oil rigs (Permian), fishing boats (Kodiak), construction (Dubai), pearl diving (Tahiti)	Ep 3
2023	Catherine Lyle recruits Hugo in Tahiti	Ep 3
2023	Anna Koenig Danner dies — pancreatic cancer	Ep 4
2023-2024	Fort Bragg training; Syria deployment; twelve kills	Ep 4
2024	Hugo visits Estes Park; discovers DIA subpoenaed Abednego's journal	Ep 4
2024-2025	PROMETHEUS revealed; Dr. Raya Patel assigned; relationship begins	Ep 5
2025	Hugo discovers PROMETHEUS embryos; Raya's betrayal exposed; Hugo confined	Eps 5-6
2025	Hugo escapes; destroys PROMETHEUS; final visit to Abednego	Ep 7
2025	Abednego dies in federal custody	Ep 8
2025	Thermobaric strike in the Colorado meadow	Ep 8
2026	Marcus Webb publishes "The First Superhuman" in <i>The Atlantic</i>	Ep 8 coda
2031	Maria Chen opens the fireproof box; discovers the notebook	Ep 8 coda

## CALIBRATION — THE CENTRAL METAPHOR

Every episode title maps to a dimension of Hugo's relationship with his own capability:

1. **Modification** — what was done to him (without consent)
2. **Calibration** — what he must do every second of every day (conscious force modulation)

3. **Drift** — what happens when calibration has no purpose (exile without identity)
4. **Weapon** — what the institution wants him to be (a capability, not a person)
5. **Prometheus** — what they try to make from him (replication without understanding)
6. **Protocols** — what reduces a person to data (the institutional machinery of control)
7. **Escape** — what autonomy costs (everything)
8. **Threshold** — what he crosses by refusing to fight (from asset to autonomous man)

Calibration is not a superpower. It is an exhausting, conscious, never-ending effort. It is the performance of normalcy that consumes Hugo's entire life. Every handshake. Every hug. Every step on a wooden floor. Every time he picks up a glass, opens a door, touches another person — he must consciously choose how much force to apply. Emotional arousal degrades calibration. Grief, rage, joy — all of them make him dangerous. The most terrifying scenes in the series are not the action sequences. They are the moments when Hugo's calibration slips.

## THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

### Central Question

*Can the world tolerate greatness it doesn't control?*

### Five Threads

1. **The Performance of Normalcy** — Hugo has spent his entire life pretending to be less than he is. Every gesture is rehearsed. Every interaction is managed. The performance is consuming him — and the show asks whether any extraordinary person can survive the requirement to be ordinary.
2. **Institutional Exploitation** — Every institution Hugo encounters — family, school, university, military, intelligence — takes from him and returns nothing. Each offers belonging and delivers control. The pattern is structural, not personal. Lyle is not a villain. She is a function of the system.
3. **The Irreducible Individual** — Hugo cannot be replicated because genius is not a formula. PROMETHEUS fails because the modification is art, not engineering — the difference between a musicologist and Mozart. The show argues that the individual is irreducible: you cannot mass-produce what one man alone created.
4. **Consent and Autonomy** — Hugo never consented to the modification. Anna never consented to the injection. The PROMETHEUS embryos never consented to their creation. The series traces a line from Abednego's first violation to Lyle's final one: the institutional assumption that extraordinary capability belongs to anyone other than the person who possesses it.
5. **Calibration as Metaphor** — The conscious modulation of capability is not unique to Hugo. Everyone calibrates — their intelligence, their ambition, their honesty — to fit a world that punishes deviation. Hugo's calibration is literal. The audience's is figurative. The question is the same: *What does it cost to be less than you are?*

# SOUND DESIGN

## Core Principles

- 1. Minimal score.** Music is sparse and textural. No heroic themes. No sentimental swells. Reference: Hildur Gudnadottir's *Chernobyl* score — ambient, organic, weight.
- 2. Calibration sounds.** The creak of an eggshell under pressure. The flex of glass. The compression of a human hand held too carefully. These intimate, ASMR-close sounds define Hugo's world. The audience should hear what Hugo feels: the constant negotiation with fragility.
- 3. Violence is sudden and silent.** The USC tackle has no dramatic score. The spine breaks. The crowd goes silent. The silence IS the score.
- 4. The mountains are freedom.** Wind, birds, the crash of boulders. The only environment where Hugo's full capability has no consequences. The mountain sounds should feel like relief.
- 5. The institution hums.** HVAC, fluorescent buzz, boot steps on tile. Fort Detrick sounds like a hospital that never sleeps. The hum should feel like surveillance.
- 6. The thermobaric strike is one sound.** A rising tone. Then nothing. No explosion debris, no aftermath. The meadow was there. Now it's not.

## CONTACT

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