

Nerves of Steel: Show Bible

William H. Tolson

Full Sail University

Nerves of Steel

A One-Hour, Serial TV Drama Series

By William H. Tolson

LOGLINE

Dr. Steve Irons seems to have a superhuman knack for bringing cutting-edge medical technology to bear. But those secret abilities may have come at a very high price, and he may not be done paying anytime soon if he wants to keep it up.

SERIES PREMISE

Set in the gargantuan St. Johns Public Hospital in Jacksonville Florida, in the year 2042, Dr. Steve Irons is the neuroscience specialist on the Special Neurology Clinic's team of doctors who cure cognitive ailments and neurological disabilities that are considered incurable with today's technology. And to those who know him, Dr. Irons is considered one of the most intelligent men to ever walk this planet, even if a bit eccentric. But to the few who know him best, it's impossible to ignore that his intelligence appears to result from illegally experimenting on himself with his own dangerous set of neuroscientific theories on cognitive enhancements. And his reclusive but confident mannerisms only seem to add to the mad-scientist vibe he exudes.

If the team only had a moment to breathe between cases, they might successfully dig deeper into what he is really up to. But between the endless red-tape and stifling oversight of a fully socialized medical system, the pressure of being considered miracle-workers in the public eye, and the whirlwind that comprises work at any crowded hospital, there never seems to be time. And they're always counting on Steve's skills to overcome the mind-boggling technological hurdles they confront with every case, so struggle with the idea of questioning his methods even if there were time.

During the first season the team's psychiatric specialist, Laura, might try to gently pry on the rare occasion she scores a much-anticipated date with Steve. Or Alex, the team's genetics specialist and Steve's only rival in intelligence, might try to trick it out of him with a devilishly complicated hypothetical question. Gaia, the team's good-natured cognitive psychology specialist, might throw a too-close-for-comfort joke his way and see how he reacts. Or, as a last resort, they could see if they might try to pry it out of Steve's old war-buddy down in the ER ward, Cliff. But all of that will tend to fall by the wayside under the cracking whip of their bureaucratic slave-driver, Paul, who never relaxes the press to keep them starting a new case before they've even finished the last.

As the first season draws to a close, Paul will start to realize something odd is going on in the department though. And once he starts pressing, the rest of the team will close ranks to protect Steve, even if they don't know exactly from what. But if he's found to have been experimenting illegally, it won't only mean he'll be fired and lose his ability to work in the one field he really loves, but it will mean thousands of people will go uncured.

The format of this show will be a single-camera hour-long drama, based on a four-act structure with a teaser to introduce the case of the episode. It will meet the expectations of the hospital franchise, with a procedural style. Targeting the more cerebrally-inclined middle-aged audience, the show will showcase the incredible results of the eventual maturation of medical technologies that can be easily imagined based on informed speculation today, build on the moral and ethical dilemmas that may come along with such technologies, and thoughtfully illustrate some controversial and complex social and political issues from multiple viewpoints.

CHARACTER BIOS

Dr. Steve Irons (52) – Dr. Irons started his career as a Navy pilot, and after losing his left forearm in the war with Iran he used his GI bill to start medical school. He continued school after diverting slightly into the field of neuroscience, and rose to the top of his field – in part by tinkering with his discoveries to make himself both smarter, and ideally more emotionally stable.

His defining characteristic is his no-nonsense view of almost everything, polarized by his seemingly idealistic view of what technology can do for us. He seems often to care little about the issues most people tend to be highly concerned with, seeing the current situation of humanity as the end of an era. That attitude not only makes him come off as self-righteous; it also makes it difficult for people around him to follow his reasoning, or predict how he'll react.

His experimenting on himself is mostly secret, because if he were found out he'd lose both his job and access to the medical technology he needs to keep developing his theories. Even though he could have a new left arm lab-grown for himself, he keeps the old mechanical one anyways so he can tinker with it. Because his hand is the only part that has had flesh grafted to it he always wears long sleeves. The rest of his team is suspicious that he's hiding things from them, but never really confronts him directly about it even though it makes most of them very uncomfortable.

Steve has a bit of a crush on Laura, but is hesitant to act on it. He despises Paul, especially his hypocritical claims to a “by the book” style of management, but tends to cover it with a cool demeanor. He also knows Paul would not hesitate to fire him if he got wind of his illicit treatments and self-modifications, just to cover his own rear. Although he would never admit it, he feels a bit threatened by Alex. His own intelligence he has trouble not seeing as “cheating” through drugs and other medical performance boosting, whereas Alex is naturally a bona fide genius. He finds Gaia mildly annoying, but is happy to have someone on the team who will always handle the patients so he doesn't have to.

His buddy Cliff he would do pretty much anything for, and Cliff is the only one he's even remotely honest with about his self-experimentation and modification.

Dr. Laura Everhart (55) – Although Dr. Everhart left work as a Clinical Psychiatrist after only ten years to pursue more cutting edge studies in the field, she still brings a much-needed practical treatment attitude to the Special Neurology team. That attitude often puts her in the position of acting as the informal leader of the team, since Paul doesn't actually lead, and Steve only exerts a strong opinion when it's in regards to something that sparks his interest. Having invested a sizeable portion of her wealth in cosmetic gene-therapy after her divorce, she appears only half her age. And because of her appearance, most of her uninformed hospital coworkers assume she will wind up dating the team's bright young prodigy, Alex. But she's secretly actually much more intrigued by the somewhat reclusive and mysterious oldest member of the team, Steve.

Dr. Everhart thinks Paul is fairly sleazy because he constantly tries to flirt with her even though he's married, and she also feels trapped by the fact he'll give her extra leniency that he doesn't extend to the rest of the team. She doesn't know Cliff all that well, but secretly resents him because he uses up so much of Steve's little bit of leisure time to the point that it eliminates most of her chances at bringing up the idea of spending any time together outside of work.

Paul Fitzgerald (59) – After Paul retired from the Navy, he began working his way up the bureaucratic ladder at St. Johns. He feels like a fish in water in the extensively regulated hospital environment, and has been very successful at the delicate social navigation that kind of system requires. Now that his two daughters and son are all off to college, he has redoubled those efforts.

He now oversees several of the most prestigious medical teams, and is known for being a very “by the book” leader in most cases. But when it suits his own interests, his “by the book attitude” is often the first thing to go. Being old squadron-mates, he had helped Steve propose the starting of that team. And he also did all the governmental legwork to get it started, a favor he won't let Steve soon forget.

Since Paul doesn't let the fact that he's married hold him back from having a good time at (and after) work, he is a big fan of Laura's, even though he can tell the feeling isn't mutual. It won't stop him from trying, though.

Cliff Mercer (45) – Cliff enlisted as a Navy Corpsman when he was 18, and dove headlong into the culture of the Marines he worked with. Eventually it unfortunately led to losing the lower half of a leg patrolling with them, though. Cliff didn't let the phase him much, transferring his Corpsmen skills and guts to becoming an ER nurse... and also still being able to outrun most Marines thanks to the newest prosthetics and plenty of sweat.

During his recovery he met Steve, and they became close friends in spite of their officer-enlisted titles. Cliff became an RN while Steve was in medical school, and circumstances have made it possible for them to keep in touch ever since. Although Cliff is gay, his feelings with regard to Steve are purely platonic.

As an outsider to the Special Neurology clinic, Cliff's opinions of its members are mostly just impressions he gets from Steve. Recommendations from both Steve and Paul did help him land the job as one of the head ER nurses at St. Johns though.

Alex Standifer (32) – Holding multiple medical degrees in fields applicable to genetic engineering and gene therapy, graduating top of his class in all of them. Alex is working at St. John's to gain hands on experience in the clinical realm before continuing his academic career, because even though he was considered one of the top geneticists in the country by the time he was thirty, the only area he routinely received criticism was that

his experience was purely in the realm of research and design. He saw working with Steve as the exact opportunity he needed to polish his ability to see medical problems in a more multifaceted light.

Alex often finds himself at odds with Steve, who was unchallenged as the “alpha” until the incredibly intelligent youngster joined the team. There is considerable friction between him and Gaia as well, since they are both outspoken about their nearly opposite political views. Alex sees most of the medical system’s problems as results of socialization, and yearns for a free market that would react more quickly to the myriad of newly discovered technological breakthroughs in the medical realm.

Despite their age difference, Alex finds Laura fascinating. Her obvious interest in Steve only adds friction to his relationship to the latter.

Gaia Gallagher (35) – Easy-going and gregarious: even though Gaia is by far the least medically talented on the team, her social skills and sense of humor dwarfs the rest of theirs. She is also the least concerned with her appearance on the team, with the possible exception of Steve, but is still cute in a way that puts her patients at ease. Since her job as the team’s cognitive psychologist is the least time-intensive, she also takes on many of the administrative tasks that Paul delegates to them.

Steve and Laura, both fairly dry; tend to be annoyed with Gaia’s efforts to lighten the mood. They do often appreciate her way with patients though, since neither of them have it. Alex considers her naïve, mostly because of her bleeding-heart-liberal political views, and so is slow to accept her advice even on subjects on which she is the expert.

SERIES CONCEPT

Nerves of Steel is set at St. John's Public Hospital, Jacksonville Florida, in the year 2042. Jacksonville is a unique setting in the medical field for several reasons by that time. Northern Florida has some of the largest hospitals because of the influx of retirees that continued to migrate to the state, as real estate there stayed depressed longer than anywhere else with a warm climate in the United States. Florida and Georgia's laws also provide loopholes in federal regulations that make it possible to still offer more cutting-edge treatments than are available through the rest of the country's fully socialized medical system, which attracts some of the most highly skilled doctors and a large amount of "medical tourism" from the Northeastern States. Partially because of that operational climate, hospitals in the state have also become known for being a source of semi-legal screening for treatments that are only available outside of the States, before committing to making the trip. This climate is an incubator for exploring the complicated dichotomy between the fairness of organized equality of service, and the efficiency of market-driven innovation, in one of the industries that the tension between the two ideologies is most emotionally potent: "miracle-working" medical technologies.

St. John's Hospital itself was the first fully federally-funded and government planned public hospital in the Southeast. As such, it has quickly become a mind-boggling mix of many already somewhat archaic and cheap, but also some revolutionary and futuristic, equipment and treatments. The hospital itself was slowly constructed on a typical government-contracted spiral production plan, so some of the most underfunded and obsolete wings are constantly mobbed while some of the wings with the most impressively powerful equipment sit nearly empty. The Special Neurology Department, whose main source of funding has been in response to their contributions to medical research, is one of the latter.

Since the majority of patients who are treated by Special Neurology require waivers for treatment outside of the ones that have received blanket federal approval, patient participation is fairly restricted even though demand is excruciatingly high for many of their treatments. The department has to quantify how the patient both shows a need that isn't being met by the typical treatment, and a condition that could lead to valuable research and testing, before the waiver will be approved for funding. So each case presents its own set of frustrating ethical dilemmas in how the department applies for the waiver.

Location Descriptions

St. John's Hospital

From the exterior, the hospital looks like a sprawling conglomeration of connected aircraft hangars, only with more windows. Since wings were added in stages, the colors don't quite match. But its gargantuan size still makes it an impressive sight. The inside of the hospital has a stark, institutional feel, with a myriad of multicolored signs and directions placarded on nearly every wall and archway. Most of the *Nerves of Steel*

characters work in the Special Neurology Clinic on the top floor of one of the newest sections, except Cliff Mercer, who works in the first-floor EMS department in an older section that is closest to the highway.

This setting sets up opportunities for Steve to get his hands on underused, or even forgotten, bits of high-tech equipment he can put to use on a special case. It also sets the stage for disasters to require some of the doctors who are used to their quite and secluded wings of the hospital to deal with the areas the practical work gets done, even though it's way below their "pay grade," causing even more tension in an already tough situation.

Special Neurology

The department is centered on a large common room with several stations, which appears to be a cross between a clinical space and a lab. This is because so many of the department's treatments and tests can only be conducted within their spaces as part of their authorization for special funds. The stations are modular, so the equipment they house often changes depending on the current cases. The far wall is a bay of windows, while the walls along the sides of the room are both lined with doors to the small offices of each of the staff members. The Special Neurology team comprises most of the primary characters: Doctors Steve Irons, Laura Everhart, Alex Standifer, and Gaia Gallagher. Paul Fitzgerald's office is on the same floor since most of the departments he oversees are in the newest section of the hospital, but down it's at the other end of the wing.

This sets the stage for episodes based on the team moving equipment in and out of the lab in ways that completely stretch the rules. The floor plan also sets up a minimal level of privacy to use most of the equipment, even though Steve would often like to use some of it in ways he doesn't want to have to explain to the rest of the team. Paul's office being nearby also sets the stage for high-tension episodes, if part of the team has to keep him distracted while the other members "sneak something under his radar."

EMS Break Room

The EMS "Break Room" is a constant bustle of activity as the emergency staff darts in and out to grab a quick bite when they can sneak off the floor for a moment, or just catch their breath and grab a cup of coffee while they vent to each other. Although it's fairly clean, the furniture is well worn and the mini-kitchen equipment is all on its last legs, much of it already begged-borrowed-and-stolen from other departments after the originals gave out. Cliff obviously spends his short breaks here, since it's as far as he can usually stand to get out of the action when he's on duty. But Steve is often a welcome but curious visitor to this break room too: preferring to mingle with the "boots on the ground" than upstairs with the other high-profile research doctors, most of whom he views as obnoxiously elitist.

This location will help generate stories where Steve overhears cases that he wants to help with, that would never make it up to his department through the usual channels. It also

sets the stage for episodes that the tension between the parts of the hospital that do the most practical work but are made of the lowest-paid employees, and the parts that are harder to rationalize funding from a practical standpoint but employ higher-paid specialists, will for Cliff and Steve to uncomfortably fence-sit on the issue. Or possibly even argue about it between the two of them.

Steve's House

Steve lives in a single-story house in the lower middle-class suburbs nearest the hospital. Inside, the furniture is a bit cobbled together but functional. Although very clean and organized, and in the 'burbs, it still has the distinct feel of a bachelor pad. The pinnacle of that feeling is exuded by the presence of his "hobby room" in the bedroom off the garage, which houses a mainframe and all sorts of other high-tech doodads he likes to tinker with on the little bit of free time that he has.

Steve's house is atypical for a Doctor for multiple reasons. The first is that he is intentionally still paid as a neuroscientist instead of a neurologist or diagnostician, purely so he has more leeway with research projects even though it means much less pay. The second is that it doesn't draw much attention to the occasional less-than-legal equipment he experiments with. And lastly, he has little interest in using the little money he has on status symbols, he'd rather use it on toys and experiments he'll appreciate on a deeper level. Which is made very clear by both the décor and the organization of all the items in his house, as well.

This sets the stage for episodes where Steve hurts himself, or is close to landing himself in trouble with the law, and has to call on Cliff or other team members for help when he overdoes it on a private project. It also provides a possible source of tension between him and other team members, who aren't sure what to make of his somewhat odd lifestyle outside of work.

Rules of the World

In this setting, there is a level of technology that could be considered borderline "magic" by today's standards, but everyone at that point still takes it just as for granted as they do today. The forces of the "singularity" have started to show more than today, especially in a few areas that seem almost inconsequential, but not to a level that would bring it to full revolutionary effect (Kurzweil, 2005). Fear-driven societal and political forces, preventing the underlying model of Moore's Law from yet supporting runaway gains in intelligence and communication, have dampened the most disruptive technological changes (Romm, 2015). A few instances of artificial intelligence have surpassed that of humans, but the technology is so heavily regulated and guarded that it's commercial and physiological application is far behind its potential. So in the meantime, cutting-edge technologies like gene therapy and nanotechnology that affect the medical realm are largely up to human experience to apply.

Communication is much more fluid in this setting, since everyone's "phone" is in their contact lenses. Cars are exclusively self-driving. And everything in your house runs on a virtual intelligence. But all of those technologies are completely taken for granted by everyone; to the point they're barely spectacle when compared to the gravity of the explosive personal relationships taking place in the setting. Steve and Paul illustrate the most polarized opinions on these issues: Steve quietly holds that American and European popular fear of technology is shamefully holding the human race back from the brink of a new era, whereas Paul openly claims certainty that the careful international regulation of emerging technology has saved the planet from Armageddon (Feller, 2015).

The US government at this point in time has also shifted toward centralization, something people still have the same arguments about. That shift has magnified both the good and bad that come along with a stronger State though; so many of those issues are even more emotionally loaded. The issue is especially noticeable in the medical field, which has started to have many of the same issues the military and public schools have faced. Alex and Gaia illustrate emotionally charged but opposite opinions on politics: Alex vocally points out that ways a freer market would have saved them from the country's economic and social troubles, while Gaia cracks jokes about how everything the government does gets undercut by greed, or the regulations would actually work (Caden, 2011).

Between improved technology and socialization of medicine, the lifespan of Americans has vastly increased. But it has not gotten that much more comfortable, on average. Nor have any of the major personal and political conflicts we face really changed that much. So this setting really just provides a magnified version of what we face today.

References

- Caden, A. (2011, March 4). *Capitalism and Socialism*. Retrieved from Mises Institute: Austrian Economics, Freedom, and Peace: <https://mises.org/library/capitalism-and-socialism>
- Feller, G. (2015, November 9). *Future technology: a force for good or a source of fear?* Retrieved from The Telegraph: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/education/festival-of-the-imagination/11890618/future-of-technology-and-humans.html>
- Kurzweil, R. (2005). *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Romm, C. (2015, October 15). *Americans Are More Afraid of Robots Than Death: Technophobia, Quantified*. Retrieved from The Atlantic: <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/10/americans-are-more-afraid-of-robots-than-death/410929/>

PILOT EPISODE TREATMENT

EPISODE 1 – “Special Delivery”

LOGLINE

Paul assigns the team to treat his old friend struck with severe early-onset dementia, but when Steve cures the patient on his own with an illicit but potentially effective treatment the other three members are left in an ethical quandary.

TEASER

Ted (58), a plain looking middle-aged man in an assuming white dress shirt and blue tie, sits in a stiflingly small cubicle unenthusiastically working various data-strewn holo-screens with a blank look on his face. Suddenly, an expression of sheer terror shoots across his face for no apparent reason, followed by unbridled rage as he picks up his interface device and hurls it over the cubicle wall with all his might. Seeming to defy the limits of his beer-bellied un-athletic build, Ted shoots up from his office chair and – like a past-his-prime bull in a “Chinette” shop – barrels through flimsy cubicle walls, furiously tossing office supplies and cheap electronics, while wildly swinging at the few younger employees who dare approach him.

Down the hall, a slightly older woman also in stodgy office attire closes and locks her office door as she glares in annoyance at the scene. She dials up 911 on her smart-lens and begins describing Ted’s rampage to the operator.

Steve Irons (52) sits in the dimly lit back bedroom of his suburban house surrounded by humming mainframes and complex holo-screen readouts of many varying sizes. A small vial of faintly metallic fluid springs out of the side of a piece of unmarked equipment next to him, which he gently loads into what looks like a syringe with no needle. Using the fingertips of his free hand to assist, he carefully aligns the flat tip of the syringe with his carotid artery. The contents of the vial suddenly, but almost silently, disappear through his skin. His eyes immediately roll back in his head and he slips from his chair in convulsions that appear similar to seizure. He blacks out on his side, drooling on the cheap beige carpet.

ACT ONE

Steve coolly sits at his desk sipping coffee in one of the small offices lining the perimeter of the Special Neurology Clinic on the top floor of the hospital, as if nothing abnormal has happened recently. Cliff Mercer (45), whose tight haircut, solid build, and visible tattoos mark him as clearly prior military, leans around the open door in a well-worn EMS jumpsuit to ask if Steve has a second. Steve warmly asks him to come on in, clearly surprised but happy to seem him up in the slow-paced research offices. Cliff closes the door behind him after checking his six, and while taking a seat says with concern that Steve’s “team administrator” Paul was poking around the ER about an odd

case that came in late yesterday afternoon. Steve agrees that something must be up if Paul is down there risking getting his Italian leather shoes stepped on, so he appreciates the heads up. Cliff sits back and relaxes as they move on to comfortable small talk about other interesting cases that have shown up in the ER recently.

Out in the central room of Special Neurology Alex Standifer (37) and Laura Everhart (55) trickle into work. Alex, meticulously groomed and sporting a perfectly tailored business suit, reeks of both refined privilege and prodigious intellectualism. Laura, even having already donned her white lab coat, would appear to be a gorgeous supermodel in her mid-20s posing as a psychiatrist to the uninformed eye. Her air of hard-won self-confidence is the biggest betrayal that her appearance is incongruent with her vast level of experience. Alex smoothly attempts to flirt with her as they warm up medical equipment and make coffee, but she humorlessly responds with smart undercuts that make it clear she isn't impressed.

Cliff exits Steve's office abruptly, and intentionally avoids acknowledging the other two. He almost barrels over Gaia Gallagher (35) as he exits the clinic, who blatantly checks him out, but he doesn't seem to notice or care and keeps on moving with a sense of urgency. Gaia, who is sweet looking in a hometown girl kind of way, cheerily greets Alex and Laura as she enters the clinic. Dressed in khakis and a blouse that is basically just a t-shirt with fringes, armed with carryout breakfast, and obviously late; it's clear she doesn't take the job, and life, as seriously as the rest of the team. She starts to inquire about Cliff to the two of them as she sets out her breakfast, but Alex signals her notice to the fact that Paul entered right behind her. Paul Fitzgerald (59), apparently unconcerned with any of them but casually waving their direction in acknowledgment anyways, heads straight into Steve's office.

Steve now appears to be tearing through multiple holo-panels of complicated data at a remarkable pace as Paul enters and closes the door behind him. Without looking away from his work, Steve says he gathers that the patient is an old squadron buddy of Paul's. Paul tersely agrees, obviously frustrated Steve has already gotten that far along. Steve reminds him that their clinic has almost a year's backlog of patients waiting for their attention. But Paul mumbles that he's already taken care of that, to which Steve doesn't seem the slightest bit surprised.

Down in the massive open-bay Non-Contagious Patient Ward, Ted violently struggles with his restraints and growls. The nurses seem uncomfortable even approaching him.

Steve emerges from his office with Paul close behind. The other team members are already posted at the conference table in anticipation of their priorities for the day changing. Steve explains that the administrator has brought an important case to them that the hospital has prioritized as urgent, the implication of which is clearly not lost on the other team members. Steve casually walks over and pours another cup of coffee as they review the case on their smart-lenses, while Paul just stands silently imposing just outside of Steve's office door. With Alex starting first, they each go around listing the specifics of what they will initially research in their fields of specialty: Alex genetic,

Laura psychiatric, Gaia psychological, and lastly Steve neurological and field-synergistic. Steve defers to Paul on whether that plan is acceptable, and he agrees. They all sit waiting until he gets the message that he no longer needs to stand there and babysit.

Ted still squirms and grunts with all his might, until a nurse nervously hangs a bag of sedative to his IV. He relaxes, then dozes off, but still retains traces of his angry scowl.

ACT TWO

The team goes to work. Laura, Gaia, and Alex do some research and consult a few other specialists in their fields. Steve is back at working through an inhuman amount of information, but stops to scrawl about twenty lines of seemingly nonsensical dashes and dots on a sheet of his steno pad, tear it out, and jam it in his front pocket. Alex begins work on designing a gene-therapy serum specific to the case, and Laura works up several pharmaceutical solutions. Down the hall in the men's bathroom, Steve, with gloves on, pops the top off of the toilet paper dispenser in one of the stalls and hides the sheet of steno paper in it.

As Steve returns to the clinic, Gaia jokes that she noticed him take gloves to the bathroom with him. He claims he was going down to the patient ward but changed his mind, and shifts the subject to why she isn't actually doing that herself. She, still humorously, points out that there isn't much more psychoanalysis she can do on a fully sedated patient. She then casually leans in his doorway and uses the opportunity of talking about the downstairs departments to ask about Cliff, with obvious romantic interest. Steve points out that he wouldn't think Cliff is her type. When she says she doesn't limit herself to a "type," he tells her not to take offense, but Cliff wouldn't be interested anyways.

She notices Alex and Laura sitting at the far end of the conference table, and giving up on Steve, joins them for a quiet powwow on the patient's situation. They agree that it isn't looking good for the patient, but that Steve seems oddly confident about whatever he's working on. And he isn't very interested in anything they're doing, even though his job is to put it all together. Gaia says she ought to at least go down and see the patient and person once, and that she has another errand she wants to run anyways.

Meanwhile, an unknown male in jeans, boots, and wearing medical gloves sneaks into the unlocked sliding-glass back door to Steve's house. In the back bedroom, a vial identical to the one Steve injected himself with earlier protrudes from the side of the same piece of equipment, which the man retrieves and drops in his pocket.

Gaia strolls up to the bustling ER reception desk, and before she can even open her mouth one of the receptionists loudly informs her that her patient has been moved to the main ward. Gaia says she knows, but she actually wanted to see if Cliff was around. After a moment to check his status, the receptionist says he's out on a speculative patrol. Gaia asks if that's as odd as it sounds, and the receptionist impatiently says that it is. But

she continues that Cliff has the kind of street-cred that nobody dares question, and then not so politely asks Gaia if she would mind taking her questions somewhere else that isn't a constant madhouse.

ACT THREE

Reassembled at the conference table for lunch, minus Paul, they fire back and forth treatment possibilities. Except Steve, who is attentive but doesn't offer anything significant. They finally agree that Alex's genetic therapy is the best option, even though it will probably take a few weeks to know if it really even worked. Steve easily agrees, and promptly leaves to "hit the head." The rest of the team is obviously disconcerted by his aloof behavior.

Back in the same bathroom stall, again gloved, Steve pops open the dispenser. There rests the vial from his house.

Back in the Clinic a nurse, Laura, and Gaia watch over Alex's shoulder as he skillfully executes and spins up his serum. He hands the crystal-clear vial to the nurse, who carefully slides it into a storage sleeve and says she understands how valuable it is and will administer it with care. As she leaves they chat about how Steve must just not have any interest in this case, even though that really doesn't seem like him. But moments later, through the glass front wall of the clinic office, Alex is shocked to see the same nurse he had just handed the serum to casually strolling the hall in the other direction with another random doctor. He darts out to ask what she's doing as Gaia and Laura follow at a more relaxed pace. The nurse tells him Dr. Irons said he would administer it, which sends Alex nearly running for the elevator. Gaia and Laura watch him go, agreeing that it's odd, but really not a reason for such a high level of alarm.

At the patient's bedside, as he produces Alex's serum, Steve asks the nurse attending the sector if she can find him a specific type of augmented saline to replace the current bag with. Watching her walk away as if he's just being a creepy old man, but really avoiding his smart-lens recording what he is doing, he swaps the vial with his own and connects it to the patient's saline lock by feel.

Rounding the corner into the patient's open-bay ward at a brisk pace, Alex sees Steve at his bedside with no nurse anywhere nearby. Suddenly he can hear the patient's heart-rate alarm from across the ward, loudly announcing a highly irregular heart rate, and breaks into a sprint as he watches the patient going into violent convulsions despite his sedation. He demands to know what the hell Steve is doing as he runs up, but Steve still sits calmly administering the remainder of the gene-therapy serum. Without waiting for the answer, Alex runs to retrieve defibrillators, but as he doubles back with them Steve physically blocks his path and tells him to cool down. Over Steve's shoulder, the patient now appears fine.

ACT FOUR

Paul slams the clinic door open, and after violently jiggling the locked metal handle to Steve's office looked, pounds on the door. He shouts over his shoulder at the three sitting wide-eyed at the table that one of them had better be ready to take over as the senior team member, because he's had it with Steve. Steve answers the door, looking unnaturally calm for having a man carrying nearly a hundred pounds more muscle towering over him with searing rage in his eyes. The door slams behind Paul, but his booming voice is still completely audible through it.

Gaia looks at the other two and says she guesses Paul didn't get all the way through his email before reacting to what happened last night. Alex agrees, but asks if the other two mind meeting him in the café for lunch today instead the usual, after they've run their tests.

Paul sits at the patient's bedside, poorly hiding a tear as he lightly converses with his old friend. Ted is completely alert, bright-eyed with a healthy complexion, and says he actually feels better than ever. Paul says with self-satisfaction that moments like this are what make his job so worthwhile, since he gets to lead a team that can work miracles.

Gaia approaches from behind Paul and asks if she can start the next battery of tests, to which Paul agrees and reassures Ted that he'll be back that afternoon.

At lunch Alex, Laura, and Gaia initially sit and eat without Steve in silence, unintentionally avoiding eye contact. Alex breaks the silence, blurting out that they all know Steve did something below board. He continues that there was no way there would even be a sign that his serum had worked yet, much less total recovery. Laura points out that the patient's brain chemistry has not only recovered, it's perfectly balanced. And Gaia says that the patient's IQ is higher, and temperament is better balanced, than they have ever been recorded earlier in his life. Alex points out that all of the is possible if regenerative genetic treatments are inserted directly with a nanotech delivery system, but that technology is still considered extremely illegal because of the many possible side-effects still unexplored by any regulating body. And it normally takes a whole team of trained technicians anyways, so he can't imagine how Steve could have done it here. But he obviously did something. Gaia points out that they don't really know anything. And Laura admits that she doesn't care, because it worked, and all of their other solutions were shots in the dark. She also chides Alex for being so concerned with backwards rules enforced by the very regulating bodies he so often curses. After the three of them share a moment of sullen contemplation, Gaia suggests that they all just sleep on it.

Late that night, Alex still sits in the minimally lit office sifting through information at a rate that nearly rival's Steve's. He prints a report, and stuffs it in an unmarked manila envelope. He stands in front of Paul's office door down the hall, staring at the envelope, mired in ethical confusion.

SEASON ONE, EPISODES 2-13

EPISODE 2 – “A Blind Eye”

Logline

Steve considers breaking a frustrating regulation to help a blind patient, but can't when Alex makes it clear he's suspicious. Tension builds between Alex and Gaia over their political views, and between Alex and Steve over Laura's interest.

Synopsis

The team's case is a patient that is blind in both eyes, but for different reasons, and Paul tells them only to fix the cheaper one to follow regulations. That sparks a heated conversation between Alex and Gaia about the problems with the socialized system. But Alex makes it clear to Steve afterwards that he still won't turn a blind eye to anything illegal going on “again,” which alerts Steve that Alex might have uncovered more of what went on last week.

Laura gets up the nerve to ask Steve on a date, but when he claims to be too busy she takes Alex instead, hoping to make Steve jealous. It works, but Steve still doesn't act on it and let her know he is actually interested in her too.

EPISODE 3 – “Awkward Fit”

Logline

Laura and Gaia bond over a case, and when they trick Steve and Cliff into a double date it ends in a triple-date with some of Cliff's old Navy friends.

Synopsis

Laura and Gaia bond while working on a complicated psychiatric case that requires both of their full skill sets.

Steve meets Cliff and a couple of his old corpsman buddies at Steve's house to illegally fix one of their prosthetics that the Veteran's Affairs medical system would take forever to fix. When they return to the hospital, Gaia says she needs some information from both Steve and Cliff to finish a psych report on team activities; which worries them that she either knows what they had done earlier that day, or about their working together to sneak the cure to the earlier dementia patient.

Gaia's meeting actually turns out to be a ploy to trick them into a double date with her and Laura. It works out for Steve and Laura, but Gaia is embarrassed when Cliff almost immediately reveals that although he's flattered by her attention, he's gay. But he still saves the day by calling his corpsman buddy with the prosthetic to meet Gaia, and the

other retired corpsman that was at one point his boyfriend, thus making it into a successful triple-date.

EPISODE 4 – “The Genes of Dissonance”

Logline

Alex and Steve argue over an ALS patient’s treatment until Alex explodes, but then has to apologize when it turns out Steve was right.

Synopsis

Steve and Alex disagree on the course of action for a patient with a case of ALS that is not responding to the normal gene therapy treatment. Alex’s suggestion is slightly cheaper, so Paul tells them just to go with that one and stop arguing about it.

Steve keeps harassing Alex about it though, while chiding him that he knows Alex’s own field better than he does, and finally Alex blows up when Steve implies that he’s only holding a hard line because of tension over him dating Laura.

When Gaia counsels with Alex afterwards, he realizes that Steve might have actually been right on both counts. And when a second look shows that Steve was actually right about the therapy, Alex fesses up to the whole team and apologizes.

EPISODE 5 – “Mother May I”

Logline

Emotions run high when Alex’s mother is diagnosed with an incurable illness that is right in their areas of specialty, which ultimately results in the whole discovering more of what Steve has been up to under the table.

Synopsis

When Alex’s mother is diagnosed with an incurable neuropathic disorder that leaves her with only months to live Paul grants Alex some time off to look over the case for himself, but he still finds no (legal) way to help her, even overseas.

Steve also takes a look, and subtly hints to Alex that he could fix it the same (illegal) way Alex knows he did with an earlier dementia patient. Alex is in knots about it, and talks through it with Gaia, but ultimately decides that he won’t break the law that badly even if it will save his mother.

Laura stays over at Steve’s that night, and winds up peeking into his back room full of illicit medical equipment in the middle of the night.

EPISODE 6 – “Stand Down”

Logline

Paul stands down the team under suspicion of illegal treatments, which leaves Steve and Laura with the impression that Alex has turned on them.

Synopsis

Paul accuses the team of illegal work behind his back, stands them down, and says that he has requested a state inspection of the department the next day. Immediately the team starts to probe each other to find the “leak” while they hurriedly prep for the inspection.

While Steve is rushing both to legitimately prep for the inspection, and to cover his tracks for the many things he actually has been doing behind Paul’s back, Laura can’t help but ask him some probing questions after what she saw at his house. Eventually he drops what he’s doing and accuses her of obviously being the leak. She tearfully admits to seeing his back room, and that she is worried about him, but that the last person she would go to about it would be Paul. They eventually conclude that it must have been Alex who alerted Paul.

EPISODE 7 – “White Gloves”

Logline

The team undergoes a rigorous government inspection, after which they become embroiled in accusations that almost tear them apart for good.

Synopsis

As government inspectors tear apart the office as if it’s a crime scene, the team stands by to “assist” them with any questions they want answered. Steve, still quietly scrambling to cover things from the inspectors, feels he can trust neither Alex nor Laura. So he relies on Gaia and Cliff.

The moment Paul and the inspection team leave, Steve straight up accuses Alex of bringing that pain on them. When the heated argument between Alex, Laura, and Steve starts turning personal, Gaia admits that it was probably her required psych evaluations of Alex and Steve that accidentally triggered the whole thing.

EPISODE 8 – “Bargaining”

Logline

Steve bargains with Paul to let him treat a homeless man with a racy experimental cure in exchange for helping speed up the team’s patient turnover rate, while Alex considers leaving the team.

Synopsis

On his way to work, Steve notices a homeless man in a wheelchair waiting in line for government rations that would be a prime candidate for a risky experimental treatment to repair his motor cortex. Paul agrees to push through the paperwork if Steve can get the team to pick up the pace that they work through their patient backlog, which he says is the main thing making the team look bad to the higher-ups.

Alex makes it clear that he has an ethical problem with the whole deal; and doesn’t feel any better about it when Steve claims to already know for certain that the treatment works, he just needs to get it on the books so he can start using it regularly.

Meanwhile Alex confides to Gaia and Laura that he’s had enough of Paul and Steve and is going to start looking for a position to lead his own team somewhere else.

EPISODE 9 – “Overload”

Logline

Paul puts pressure on the team to handle two cases at once even though they’re all distracted with personal issues, which ultimately results in Alex applying an expensive treatment to a patient who didn’t need it.

Synopsis

In an effort to speed up their turnover rate, Paul has the team take on two cases at once: another ALS patient that isn’t responding to normal treatment, and psych patient whose brain chemistry is damaged from excessive anti-depressant use.

At the same time, Steve is drugged out of his mind because of meds he is on from an experiment he’s secretly running on himself at night, which the team can’t help but notice. Steve barely looks at the ALS case before Alex takes it over, who is also tired from applying to other jobs during all of his time off.

When the ALS patient reacts abnormally to the special serum Alex designed for him, Steve looks at the case closer and notices that the patient actually just has syphilis. Which both the original doctors and Alex should have checked for before going any further with expensive ALS treatments.

EPISODE 10 – “Misery’s Company”

Logline

Steve’s experimenting on himself seems to be getting out of control, and Alex and Gaia bond over their perceived failings on the team.

Synopsis

Cliff notices that Steve is late to work, and finds him at his place so drugged that he can’t even find his way to his car. When he tells Steve he’s got to get it under control, Steve tells him not to worry because he’s almost done with the project he’s working on.

Alex confides in Gaia that he stopped looking for a job as a lead because he feels he couldn’t handle it after he blew it with the last couple patients. The counseling session turns to a heart-to-heart when she admits she has similar feelings after causing the inspection nightmare by entrusting Paul with too much information.

Alex stays late in the lab mixing a potent cognitive performance enhancer.

EPISODE 11 – “Mentor and Hypocrite”

Logline

Alex does incredible work on a complicated case, but it tips off Steve that he’s started using performance-enhancing drugs as a result of his perceived failures. Steve makes up with Laura but sounds like he is planning something big.

Synopsis

Alex devises an ingenious field-synergistic solution to a complicated degenerative neuropathy case that Steve hadn’t even considered, and executes it flawlessly. Steve does, however, notice Alex exhibiting the side effects of performance enhancing drugs he himself has used in the past.

Steve tries to mentor Alex about how addictive human performance technology can be, and how it can make you lose track of what your real talents are after awhile. He tries to convince Alex that earlier mistakes weren’t completely his fault, and that he doesn’t need more than his natural abilities.

Steve also asks Laura out on a make-up date, but scares her when he sounds almost as if he’s preparing to go into combat. The psychiatrist in her can’t help but ask if he’s contemplating suicide. He says not even close: he’s discovered something great but he’s not quite ready to tell her about it completely yet.

EPISODE 12 – “All-knowing”

Logline

Cliff finds Steve stuck in the middle of a self-performed surgery and has to ask Alex for help saving him, which results in Alex discovering that Steve’s project has been an effort to create a direct connection between his brain and everything that is online.

Synopsis

Power goes out while Steve is in the midst of having a virtual intelligence perform surgery on him while he’s under. He awakens to find his arm still open, and calls Cliff. But when he can’t stay conscious to walk Cliff through finishing the procedure, Cliff calls the only person he knows can probably help: Alex.

Alex saves Steve, and even finishes the procedure, but in the process discovers what Steve has been doing to himself. Cliff thought he was just installing some sort of computer in his prosthetic, but Alex explains that what Steve did is much more powerful than that. He actually connected his prosthetic directly to his brain through a completely new set of neural pathways he had been growing inside his arm over the last few months, and filled the prosthetic with various information communication systems. So if it works, Steve will essentially “know” everything that is online. And he hadn’t even needed to open himself up until the very last step to make the final connection, which only went awry because of the multi-day power outage.

Meanwhile, power being out doesn’t stop Gaia and Laura from devising a psychoactive drug cocktail and treatment plan for one of the Psych patients on their waiting list even though Alex and Steve are both inexplicably missing from work.

EPISODE 13 – “Breaking Eggs”

Logline

Paul fires Alex, despite Steve fighting hard to keep him on the team.

Synopsis

While Steve is still out “sick,” Paul conducts performance reviews with the other members of the team. On Alex’s review, Paul tells him that him to look for another job because he doesn’t seem to have any skills that Steve can’t already provide, and that his mistakes due to clinical inexperience have been costing the hospital too much. Alex, shocked, just accepts it.

But when Gaia and Laura find out, they call Steve for help. Steve, looking terrible, comes in and fights tooth and nail with Paul to keep Alex. Paul is surprised because he thought he was actually doing Steve a favor. Steve is stuck, because most of the reasons

he wants to keep Alex on the team so badly Paul doesn't even know about. So Paul sticks to his guns.

Steve still tells Alex he'll try to keep him, but Alex seems resigned about it. He tells Steve that his secret is safe with him, but Steve says that isn't what it's about: he wants their team to be more than it is, and that Alex would be a critical part of that.