

THE 24 HOUR BURDEN

SERIES BIBLE

A one-hour science-fiction drama/thriller

Created by Geoff McCue

Based on the novel and feature screenplay by Geoff McCue

Series at a Glance

Format	One-hour serialized drama/thriller; 10 episodes per season; approximately 50-58 pages per episode.
Genre	Science fiction / psychological drama / grounded thriller.
Premise	A weary middle-aged medical-device salesman begins seeing events exactly twenty-four hours before they happen. The future he sees cannot be changed. His only power is to prepare for the aftermath.
Engine	Each vision creates a ticking 24-hour clock: Burton must decide whom to tell, what to prepare, what not to disturb, and how much responsibility he bears for an event he cannot prevent.
Setting	Contemporary Midwestern America: homes, hospitals, offices, neighborhood institutions, bridges, streets and emergency scenes rendered with grounded realism.
Tone	Intimate, suspenseful and emotionally adult. Extraordinary science-fiction is treated as a human problem rather than a superhero fantasy.
Season One	Burton moves from denial and experimentation to responsibility, exposure and community leadership, ultimately learning that foresight is less important than presence.
Current Scripts	Episode 1 “Tomorrow” - 55 FD pages; Episode 2 “The Rule” - 55 FD pages; Episode 3 “Witness” - 54 FD pages.

Logline

After an accidental neurological event gives a burned-out salesman exact visions of the next twenty-four hours, he discovers the cruel rule of his ability: he cannot change what he sees. He can only decide how much suffering remains after tomorrow arrives.

The Series

THE 24 HOUR BURDEN is a grounded science-fiction drama built around a deceptively simple reversal of the precognition genre. Burton Steen does not receive warnings that allow him to stop the future. The event itself is fixed. A fall still happens. A suicide still occurs. A fire still starts. What can change is the human damage surrounding the event: who is present, how quickly help arrives, whether panic becomes order, whether a victim faces the aftermath alone.

That limitation creates the series. Every episode asks a moral question rather than merely a procedural one. If Burton knows a tragedy is coming, does he have a duty to tell the people involved? What if telling them makes their final twenty-four hours worse? What if police, doctors or family members refuse to believe him? What if preparation looks like complicity? What if strangers begin demanding that he see their tomorrows?

The science-fiction mechanism is deliberately narrow. Burton sees fragments exactly twenty-four hours ahead, often with sensory specificity but incomplete context. He cannot summon a convenient answer to every question. The visions are evidence, not omniscience. His growth comes from learning to combine limited foreknowledge with ordinary human judgment, trust and community.

Why It Is Different

The Future Is Fixed

The central dramatic rule separates the series from stories in which foreknowledge exists to avert an outcome. Burton can alter the route to an event, but the event reasserts itself. The dramatic question therefore changes from “Can he stop it?” to “What can he do with the twenty-four hours he has?”

Preparation Is the Power

Burton’s victories are not magical rescues. They are practical acts: a first-aid kit already open, a hospital bag packed, volunteers staged before a fire, an evacuation list built before floodwater rises, or simply the right words ready when another person’s life breaks open.

The Burden Is Emotional

Knowing tomorrow does not make Burton powerful. It makes him responsible. He must live twice through frightening events: once in the vision and once when they arrive. The series explores anticipatory grief, control, guilt, usefulness, aging, marriage, parenthood and the temptation to confuse being needed with being loved.

The Rules of the Ability

- Burton’s visions occur exactly twenty-four hours before the event depicted.
- What Burton clearly sees will occur. Attempts at direct prevention can change the path, but not the fixed event.
- Burton can materially alter the aftermath: response time, secondary injury, panic, isolation, rescue readiness and the human cost around the fixed event.
- Visions are fragmentary. Burton may receive a face, sound, location, object, time or sensory clue without understanding the complete context.
- The phenomenon begins after a dangerous combination of medication, psilocybin, alcohol and TENS stimulation, but later visions can occur spontaneously.
- The visions are not a universal answer machine. Burton cannot simply request lottery numbers, solve arbitrary mysteries or inspect any future he chooses.
- Neurologist Dr. Evelyn Monroe finds no conventional pathology. Burton’s brain appears to process future experience with qualities resembling immediate memory.
- The signal can change in strength and clarity, forcing Burton to confront who he is without certainty.

Themes

Fate vs. agency	If an event cannot be changed, where does human freedom still exist? The series locates agency in response, relationship and meaning.
Presence vs. control	Burton begins by trying to manage everyone. He grows by learning that being present can matter more than fixing.
Usefulness vs. worth	Burton's fear of becoming obsolete at work mirrors his dependence on the visions. He must discover value that is not based on being indispensable.
Knowledge vs. responsibility	Foreknowledge creates moral obligations but no clear ethical manual. Every disclosure can help, harm or distort a relationship.
Marriage under pressure	Jeanie becomes more than the person Burton wants to protect. She becomes his moral equal and the person who challenges his need to control.
Community	The story expands from one man's private crisis to collective action. Burton's greatest successes happen when other people contribute what he cannot know.

World and Tone

The world is recognizably ordinary. Burton does not operate from a secret laboratory or government command center. He works in medical-device sales, argues with his wife in the kitchen, drinks with an old friend, worries about his daughter and keeps his research in a garage notebook. That normality makes each rupture into tomorrow more unsettling.

Visions should feel immediate rather than dreamlike: sharp sound, tactile details, clocks, objects, fragments of dialogue and a disorienting collapse of present and future. The show avoids glossy “psychic” imagery. Suspense comes from clocks, incomplete information and the audience's knowledge that the fixed event is approaching.

Principal Characters

BURTON STEEN

52. A veteran medical-device salesman whose profession, marriage and sense of purpose have all begun to feel obsolete. Intelligent, practical and compulsively solution-oriented. His greatest strength - preparation - is also his flaw when it becomes control. The visions initially make him feel useful again, then force him to learn that worth cannot depend on knowing more than everyone else.

JEANIE STEEN

Burton's wife and emotional counterweight. She has endured years of his pain, withdrawal and problem-solving reflex. Once she learns the truth, she refuses to become a protected bystander. Jeanie helps turn Burton's private burden into shared responsibility and repeatedly brings him back to the present.

LEAH STEEN

Burton and Jeanie's adult daughter. She loves her father but resents the way he converts vulnerability into advice. Her discovery of the visions sharpens the show's ethical stakes: foreknowledge about someone you love can become another form of control. Leah's relationship with Burton becomes one of the clearest measures of his growth.

ADAM KLINE

Burton's oldest friend. Grounded, skeptical, loyal and practical. Adam is the person who can challenge Burton without romanticizing the phenomenon. Over the season he becomes an essential operations partner, proving that trust can be as valuable as foresight.

DR. EVELYN MONROE

A neurologist and researcher who treats Burton's experience as a scientific problem without reducing him to a specimen. Her testing provides language and structure, but evidence creates its own danger: if the phenomenon is documented, Burton's private life may become impossible to protect.

TINA ALVAREZ

A young reporter who notices the impossible pattern in Burton's appearances around accidents. Smart enough not to publish what she cannot prove, Tina represents both threat and potential ally. Her presence asks whether truth always deserves immediate exposure.

MATT COLSON

Burton's colleague and friend at MedTec. Matt initially sees commercial possibility in Burton's ability, then sees the cost. His temptation gives the series a grounded way to explore exploitation without turning the story into a conventional conspiracy thriller.

GARY HOLLIS

Burton's boss at MedTec. He embodies the ordinary pressure Burton faced before the visions: automation, relevance, quotas and aging in a changing profession. Burton's changing relationship with work parallels his changing relationship with the future.

CARL JEPSON

A successful former colleague whose entrepreneurial path represents the life Burton might have chosen. Carl is less villain than mirror - proof that Burton's regret existed long before tomorrow began speaking to him.

Season One Arc

Season One tracks Burton through four stages: discovery, rules, responsibility and integration. Episodes 1-3 establish the phenomenon and its emotional cost. Episodes 4-6 widen the circle of people who know and test whether Burton's rule can scale beyond his household. Episodes 7-9 turn private foresight into public pressure and force Burton to act when information is incomplete. Episode 10 culminates in a community-wide crisis where his greatest achievement is not predicting the future but organizing people who can function without prediction.

The season ends with the possibility that the visions may fade. That is not a reset. It is the point. Burton must decide whether the man he became was created by the ability or merely awakened by it.

Season One Episode Guide

EPIISODE 1: “TOMORROW”

Burton Steen discovers that an impossible conversation he experienced in advance occurs exactly twenty-four hours later.

Insomnia, chronic pain, career obsolescence and a strained marriage push Burton into a reckless experiment in his garage. A vivid episode appears to show tomorrow. When it repeats exactly, Burton begins controlled tests. A pharmacy incident proves the event resists prevention; a delivery accident proves the damage around it can be reduced. The pilot ends when Burton sees Jeanie suffer a serious fall the following night.

EPIISODE 2: “THE RULE”

Burton has twenty-four hours to protect Jeanie from an injury he increasingly believes cannot be prevented.

Burton removes hazards and prepares for every contingency, but Jeanie still falls through a different chain of events. His preparation changes the fear and medical aftermath, not the fracture itself. Forced to confess, Burton brings Jeanie into the secret. Dr. Monroe begins structured testing. The episode ends with a new vision: Clara, a stranger in a blue coat, will go over a bridge. Burton decides he will be there.

EPIISODE 3: “WITNESS”

Burton confronts the cruelest version of his rule when knowing a stranger will die still does not give him the power to save her.

Burton reaches Clara and tries to talk her down, but the fixed event occurs. Grief drives him deeper into Monroe’s research and into difficult conversations with Jeanie and Leah about control. Reporter Tina Alvarez begins connecting Burton to events before they happen. After Burton tries to step away from the visions, a spontaneous image shows the Westbrook Community Center in flames. This time his family does not ask how to stop it. They ask how to prepare.

EPIISODE 4: “AFTERMATH”

A community-center fire becomes the first large-scale test of Burton’s belief that preparation can change human cost.

Burton recruits Adam, Monroe, Jeanie and a small volunteer network without being able to explain everything. At 8:47 P.M. the fire starts exactly as seen. Because medical supplies, blankets, traffic control and helpers are already staged, chaos becomes triage and no one dies. Burton enters the smoke and finds Derek, the young man from his vision who accidentally started the fire. Matt realizes Burton knew. The victory proves the rule can scale - and makes secrecy harder.

EPIISODE 5: “THE PRICE OF KNOWING”

As more people learn Burton’s secret, every relationship becomes a question of trust, exploitation and disclosure.

Matt confronts Burton and initially sees the commercial value of tomorrow. Burton shows him the human cost instead. Tina’s investigation closes in, while Monroe warns that rigorous scientific documentation could eventually expose them all. Burton’s growing network begins receiving requests from people who want warnings about their own lives. Burton must establish ethical boundaries: no gambling, no profit, no promises, no pretending he can save everyone.

EPISODE 6: “BLIND SPOTS”

When Burton’s visions weaken, the man who finally feels useful becomes terrified of becoming ordinary again.

The signal grows inconsistent: missing visions, blurred details and fragments without context. Burton makes mistakes at work and at home because he has begun relying on foreknowledge rather than attention. Monroe sees possible neurological adaptation; Burton experiences it as loss. Tempted to recreate the dangerous original trigger, he hides the urge from Jeanie. The episode ends with Burton standing over the locked chemical box, forced to choose between certainty and the life he has rebuilt.

EPISODE 7: “EXPOSURE”

A pattern of impossible preparedness pushes Burton into public view, where gratitude and blame arrive together.

Tina can prove Burton appears around incidents before emergency services do, but she still cannot prove why. Online speculation turns him into prophet, fraud and target. Families thank him for being there; others ask why he did not prevent what happened. Jeanie asks the question Burton fears most: what happens when the public decides every tragedy he did not mitigate is his fault? Tina chooses restraint, but the story is now larger than any one reporter.

EPISODE 8: “TWENTY-FOUR HOURS”

A massive flood vision gives Burton too much information and too little certainty.

At 3:00 A.M., Burton sees the river over its banks, families on roofs, a teenager in freezing water and the community center half submerged. The images are broad, fragmented and impossible for one man to manage. Instead of building a plan around what he alone knows, Burton builds it around what everyone knows: emergency management, medicine, neighborhood knowledge, transportation and logistics. The city begins preparing while official forecasts still lag behind.

EPISODE 9: “HIGH WATER”

As the flood arrives, Burton must stop treating visions as instructions and start trusting people who cannot see tomorrow.

Water cuts roads and isolates neighborhoods. A red boot and a hand at an attic window become clues rather than commands, leading rescuers to a trapped family. Burton sees a teenager clinging to a tree but resists a reckless solo rescue, instead helping a trained team build a safer one. Adam, Jeanie, Leah and Monroe make critical decisions outside Burton’s knowledge. The future looks exactly like his vision - and profoundly different because the community is ready.

EPISODE 10: “SHOW UP”

In the aftermath of the flood, Burton faces the possibility that the visions are fading and must decide who he is without tomorrow.

The water recedes. Burton helps clean homes, repairs relationships and confronts his job without using foreknowledge as armor. Monroe tells him the signal may disappear entirely. Burton finally understands that the visions were a catalyst, not his value. He writes one final rule in the notebook: YOU DON’T NEED TO SEE THE FUTURE TO BE PRESENT. SHOW UP. At 3:17 A.M., the hour that once represented pain and dread, Burton stands with Jeanie and watches dawn without searching the horizon for answers.

Episode Engine Beyond Season One

The format can continue beyond the first-season adaptation because the rule generates stories at multiple scales. A vision can involve a family argument, a medical emergency, a workplace collapse, a public disaster, a crime Burton cannot prove has not happened yet, or a person whose future action raises an ethical dilemma. The twenty-four-hour window naturally creates urgency while the fixed-event rule prevents the series from becoming an easy “save of the week.”

Future seasons can deepen three durable arenas: Burton’s private life, Monroe’s scientific work, and public/institutional pressure. The show can explore whether others can reproduce the phenomenon, whether Burton should participate in research, how law enforcement treats actionable foreknowledge, and what happens when people begin changing their behavior because they believe Burton knows what is coming - all while preserving the core rule that knowledge does not equal control.

Visual Language

- Clocks and timestamps are used sparingly but precisely. The audience should feel the approach of a known moment without constant countdown graphics.
- Visions favor concrete sensory anchors: a red boot, a blue coat, a digital clock, smoke in a corridor, the sound of an ankle breaking, a phrase that later repeats.
- Present and future can share compositions so that validation is visually uncanny: the same room, angle or gesture arriving one day later.
- Burton’s notebook evolves visually from frantic private proof to structured research log to community planning tool.
- The camera remains grounded in human faces during disasters. Scale matters, but consequence matters more.

Comparable Audience Positioning

The series sits in the space between grounded speculative dramas and emotionally driven thrillers: a high-concept premise with a deliberately human scale. Its hook is accessible in one sentence, while the fixed-future rule creates a philosophical and emotional distinction from traditional precognition stories. The show is designed for viewers who want suspense, moral dilemmas and family drama alongside science-fiction.

Creator Statement

THE 24 HOUR BURDEN is ultimately not a story about predicting tomorrow. It is about the human desire to control pain before it reaches us - and the discovery that control is not the same thing as love, courage or usefulness. Burton’s extraordinary condition forces him to confront an ordinary truth: we cannot prevent every loss awaiting the people we love, but we can decide whether they face it alone.

The series expands that idea from a marriage and a family to a neighborhood and, eventually, a community. Burton begins as a man afraid he has become obsolete. He ends the first season understanding that the most valuable thing he can offer is not knowledge of the future. It is his willingness to show up.

Development Status

Pilot

Episode 1 “Tomorrow” - completed; 55 Final Draft pages.

Episode 2	“The Rule” - completed; 55 Final Draft pages.
Episode 3	“Witness” - completed; 54 Final Draft pages.
Underlying IP	Original novel and feature screenplay by Geoff McCue.
Season Plan	Ten-episode first-season arc developed from the existing underlying story, with a continuing-series engine beyond Season One.