

SUCCESS

Pilot - Cold Open/Teaser

Written by

Timothy J. Evans

**TEASER**

1

INT. CONFERENCE CENTRE FOYER - AFTERNOON

1

Behind two large doors, muffled applause rings out.

Next to the doors, large freestanding posters advertise "Two hours with Alex Reed, From Stress to Success!". Emblazoned on the posters and self-help books on a nearby table, a handsome 30-something man, composed and in control.

BANG! A side door flies open and the applause breaks through for a moment. ALEX REED slides through the opening. His forced smile quickly fades as he pulls off a lapel mike and dumps it on the ground. He breathes hard, leans on his poster that almost topples.

ALEX

Shit!

Alex looks at the poster, the books. Poster Alex looks back, less composed. The title now reads "Alex Reed, From Failure to Fraud!"

Alex brushes past the posters and heads for the glass doors and the promise of the outside world.

CREAK! The two large doors swing open and a decent sized group of people streams through. Enough to sell some books, not enough to make a lot of money.

Alex tries to hide but is soon spotted by his fans.

FAN 1

... just so great. Hey there he is!

Enthusiastic men and women approach Alex. A clamour builds up as they vie for his attention.

Fan 2

Alex!  
inspirational!

FAN 3

So

FAN 1 approaches, sweaty hand reaching out from an ugly, lint covered SWEATER. Alex backs away, almost physically repulsed.

ALEX

I'll be with you all in a minute!

Alex rushes off, out of the room.

2 INT. MEN'S BATHROOM

2

Alex bursts through the door, breathing hard.

He stumbles up to the mirror, flips on the tap.

ALEX

You can do this.

He tries to calm his breathing. He turns to see another Alex, reflected in the mirror next to him. SPEAKER ALEX is turned side on, grin wide, addressing an invisible crowd.

SPEAKER ALEX

We all know that little voice  
that tells us that we can't do  
it.

Alex watches Speaker Alex. He absently squirts soap on his hands, washes, squirts, washes. Again and again.

SPEAKER ALEX

It's the voice of our anxiety,  
that can compel us to fixate, to  
do something that makes us feel  
in control.

Speaker Alex pauses for softly heard applause. Alex looks down at his red, raw hands, still soapy.

ALEX

Dammit.

Alex pulls some towels out, dries his hands.

SPEAKER ALEX

Look at me. As a kid, I could  
barely talk to a stranger without  
being sick. Now I'm up here, an  
author, public speaker and actor  
of all things!

More soft applause. Alex faces his real reflection. It's pale, sickly. He rushes off.

3 INT. BATHROOM STALL - MOMENTS LATER

3

Alex hunches over the toilet and heaves up sick.

SPEAKER ALEX (V.O.)

By confronting those things that  
terrify us, we can learn to let  
go of that need for control.

4 INT. BATHROOM HALLWAY

4

Alex emerges from the bathroom, a little worse for wear.

He looks up and down the hallway. One direction, the murmur of the crowd. The other, a glowing green escape sign.

SPEAKER ALEX (V.O.)

That need to escape, to be safe.

Alex sets himself, spins towards the crowd and steps forward.

Fan 1 gesticulates wildly, the ugly sweater spreads lint over the floor.

FAN 1 (O.S.)

How brave to get up in front of  
all of us, it's a big crowd  
today! So inspirational!

On Alex, eyes wide. He pivots, straight towards the exit. He pushes through the door.

5 EXT. AUDITORIUM CAR PARK

5

Overcast afternoon. Yellow cabs pass, a subway train rumbles nearby. It's a quieter part of the city but clearly NEW YORK.

Speaker Alex, confident, stands by a row of bikes. Alex trudges reluctantly towards them.

Speaker Alex speaks into the middle distance.

SPEAKER ALEX

I used to train from 2am,  
compulsively. Long distance  
running. Now I just stick to the  
bike lanes like half a million  
others.

Audience laughter at this. Speaker Alex chuckles. Alex grimly reaches down to unlock his bike.

CUT TO:

6 INT. AUDITORIUM FOYER

6

The crowd of fans mill around. Some clutch books with black sharpie pens in their hands.

LINDA MCCREAD, 50's, tight blonde ponytail and all business, stands in the midst of the crowd. She surreptitiously dials her smartphone

LINDA

Alex will be here in a moment.  
He's so excited to meet you all.

She beams out at the crowd. Behind her, through the front glass doors, Alex pedals. He slows, waits for a car to pass, then pedals away.

Some people notice. Linda's smile slips ever so slightly.

BACK TO:

7 EXT. NEW YORK STREET

7

Alex pedals alongside slow traffic.

Through a shopfront, a big LED TV shows Speaker Alex, who moves confidently across the auditorium stage. He can be heard above the traffic.

SPEAKER ALEX

(on LED TV)

I was listening to that inner critic. And you all know how dangerous that can be.

Speaker Alex pauses and stares directly out from the screen. Alex locks eyes with him and pedals heedlessly out into the street.

A truck pulls out, Alex's bike speeds ahead. HORNS BLARE.

SCREECH! The front grill of the truck. Alex snaps around, GASPS, pulls the brakes hard!

SKKRT! Alex skids to a stop and puffs out. Across the street, a truck rumbles along - not even close.

But nearby, an OLD LADY shuffles across the pedestrian crossing in front of Alex.

She turns to shake her head at him as if to say "Watch where you're going!" Alex gives an apologetic shrug.

She passes and Alex pedals on.

8 EXT. ALEX'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

8

SPEAKER ALEX (V.O.)

Let alone the constant stress of social media these days, where everything we do is analysed by thousands.

Alex slides his bike into a spot, hooks it up and starts up a porch flight of stairs, two at a time.

He pulls out his vibrating phone and just misses a call from Linda. It's her fourth missed call.

He swipes it away quickly and up pops a notification from his social media. He's been tagged in a bunch of posts.

He pushes through the building's doors as he scrolls through.

9 INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT BUILDING 9

Posts fly by as Alex runs up the shabby stairwell. The lift is broken.

- @AlexReed was awesome! #StresstoSuccess

- Don't give up, live like @AlexReed

- An hour wasn't enough @AlexReed!

Alex clicks the like button on each post, trying to hold the phone as he shambles up the stairs. As he does, they start to change -

- @AlexReed could've done better - more like #LackOfSuccess

- Just give up @AlexReed

- An hour I'll never get back @AlexReed!

Alex hurriedly unlikes them, then likes them again. He tries a number of times but they won't change back.

He pushes through a door and -

10 EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING ROOFTOP 10

He's scaled the building. It's not a short building.

ALEX  
Not again.

He sighs and turns back.

CUT TO:

11 INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER 11

Alex pushes through his front door, pops his keys on a hanger near the door.

The apartment is old, small but neat. Alex beelines for a built-in cupboard door.

Speaker Alex stands in the living room and delivers his talk to the couch.

SPEAKER ALEX  
And all it takes is one small  
thing to set us off.

Speaker Alex pauses, his attention diverted for a moment.

CUT TO:

12 INT. AUDITORIUM - EARLIER 12

Alex looks out into the crowd. The lights are strong but he can make out a large man in a woollen sweater.

His gazes focuses in. The sweater is covered in lint.

Alex frowns. He checks his notes. His talk is almost finished.

BACK TO:

13 INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT 13

Alex wrenches open the cupboard. Inside is a small washer and dryer, racked on top of each other.

Alex reaches for the dryer, pulls the door open but he can't quite see inside.

He spins and scans the room. Behind him, Speaker Alex is wedged in the small cupboard, bringing his talk to a close.

SPEAKER ALEX  
Just remember. No matter how hard  
it seems.

Alex moves off, he can be heard rummaging around the apartment.

SPEAKER ALEX  
You can always find help.

On Alex, victorious, RICKETY CHAIR in hand.

Alex plonks the chair down, stands on it. He can see the dryer better now. He reaches in and around, pulls something out.

A LINT COLLECTOR. Alex peers intently at it - empty. He breathes a sigh of relief and places it back in the machine.

He turns, stops, then leans into the machine to check it again.

CRACK! The chair snaps under him. Alex's shocked face plummets.

He CRASHES to the ground, hard, breath knocked out. He groans.

Speaker Alex stands over him, smiling.

SPEAKER ALEX

Reaching out and asking for help  
is the first step. Thank you all  
for coming today.

On Alex, wincing as he pulls out his phone. He holds the newly cracked screen up, dials.

ALEX

Hey Sonny.

(beat)

Yep, it's been one of those days.

SMASH CUT TO:

TITLES: SUCCESS.

**END TEASER**



TV PILOT EXAMPLE

TEASER

INT. DEMOUNTABLE - DAY

A MAN sits in a SPACESUIT and weeps.

Harsh fluorescent light bathes the room he is in. He sits on an orange STOOL, below a large digital CLOCK.

The glowing red numbers count down. 8 minutes.

Mounted next to him is a large LCD SCREEN, filled with measurements. Air pressure, temperature, engine level. The title -- X75 ATMOSPHERIC LAUNCH: TEST 01.

His hands fumble with something small, a tarnished metal badge. Pilot's WINGS, with a large star nestled between them.

Gloved fingers softly polish the grey metal.

SPACESUIT MAN  
(softly)  
Goddamn asshole...

The spacesuit is glossy, modern but still awkward. A NASA patch sits on the right shoulder.

The man inside the suit is a wreck. He's forty years old. His eyes are red, face blotchy and damp. Stiff black and grey whiskers creep up his face. He looks like the day after a weekend bender.

BUZZ. The dark HEADSET stretched around his skull crackles.

HEADSET (V.O.)  
(through static)  
Control transfer ... proceed to  
vessel.

A door stands across from him. Above it a LIGHT switches from red to green.

SPACESUIT MAN  
Shit.

No more weeping now. He gathers himself and tries to clear his face. He moves for the door

HEADSET  
Pilot, please proceed.

He turns and places the wings on his seat. He stares at them. They stare back. Both wait for the other to blink.

He blinks first, his face replaced by a stony mask

The wings rattle as he opens and slams the door. Footsteps fade away. The wings sit silently for a moment.

The clock continues its countdown.

Then yelling, people running and...

WHOOSH! The sound of a jet engine exploding into life. Everything shakes, the wings almost leaving the seat.

The sound grows fainter and fainter. The screech of an alarm pierces the room.

The jet engine screams and the sound grows louder and louder...

BOOM! A deep explosion reverberates through the room. The walls buckle in as everything is thrown over. The wings take flight and land on the roof.

People scream, alarms wail. Smoke and fire seeps into the room.

The wings lay overturned on the new floor of the building. The fluorescent light blinks and then ... goes out.

END TEASER

FEATURE FILM EXAMPLE

Claire leans her head against the glass.

Thrum. Thrum! THRUM!

CLAIRE  
(whispered)  
Or something's coming.

Outside, the dark cold water looks back on Claire leaned against the thin glass. Alone, so small and fragile.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOAT - LATER

Claire drives the small boat back across the water, cold wind billows around her thick jacket.

Ana perches beside her and looks out across the choppy water.

Her hands are wrapped around her small, green pendant.

A pregnant silence

ANA  
Nothing's down there Claire.

Claire looks over at Ana, hesitates.

CLAIRE  
What do you ...

ANA  
(interrupting)  
I heard you. Last night. Your 'bad dream'.

CLAIRE  
I was talking?

ANA  
Shouting more like it. And in the restaurant. About something, in the water. From the deep.

Claire pauses, her eyes fixed ahead.

Silence, except for the rumble of the boats motor.

ANA (CONT'D)  
I thought if you could see it yourself, you'd know.

Claire's hand's grip the boat's wheel tightly.

Ana reaches over, puts a hand on Claire's shoulder.

ANA (CONT'D)

Claire. You can talk to me.

Claire abruptly cuts the engine on the boat. The boat gradually drifts and slows.

Claire's eye's shimmer. The waves gently lap against the boat's side.

CLAIRE

Ana, I've seen things. Things that I can't explain.

ANA

Like what?

Claire breathes hard. The boat rocks back and forth, out in the middle of the water.

CLAIRE

Dark water pulling me down. A force, a presence. Calling me.

Ana listens intently, still grasping her pendant with one hand.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

He wants me to do things. To give in, to let him take me.

ANA

Claire, whatever this is, it can't hurt you.

Claire laughs mirthlessly, pulls a glove off. Her bandaged hand flexes, a wince of pain on her face.

CLAIRE

Already has. And not just me.

Ana looks on, confused.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Ms. Stewart. She saw him, I cleaned it up but she left his message. And I think Taylor too.

Ana's face is hard, memory of a missing girl who she failed.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I think he made her do it. What if he makes me.

Claire trails off as fearful tears form in her eyes. Ana leans over and grabs Claire with both hands.

ANA

You still have a choice Claire. You can keep running away. Or you can face it. You weren't made to give in to fear. You were made to be strong.

Claire tries to shrug this off but something sticks.

CLAIRE

Sounds like something my holier than thou mum would say.

Ana looks deep into Claire's eyes.

ANA

I'm here for you. Whatever you need to figure out, we can do it together.

Claire looks away. She can't hold that intense moment any longer. She looks at that green pendant that rests of Ana's chest.

CLAIRE

It's nice. What is it?

Ana's fingers the pendant. She smiles.

ANA

Something *my* holier than thou mum gave me. It helps me remember who I am.

CLAIRE

Didn't think you'd need reminding.

Ana's smile grows a little.

ANA

Always.

Claire eases, the nervous tension broken. She shares that smile with Ana.

Claire revs the engine back on.