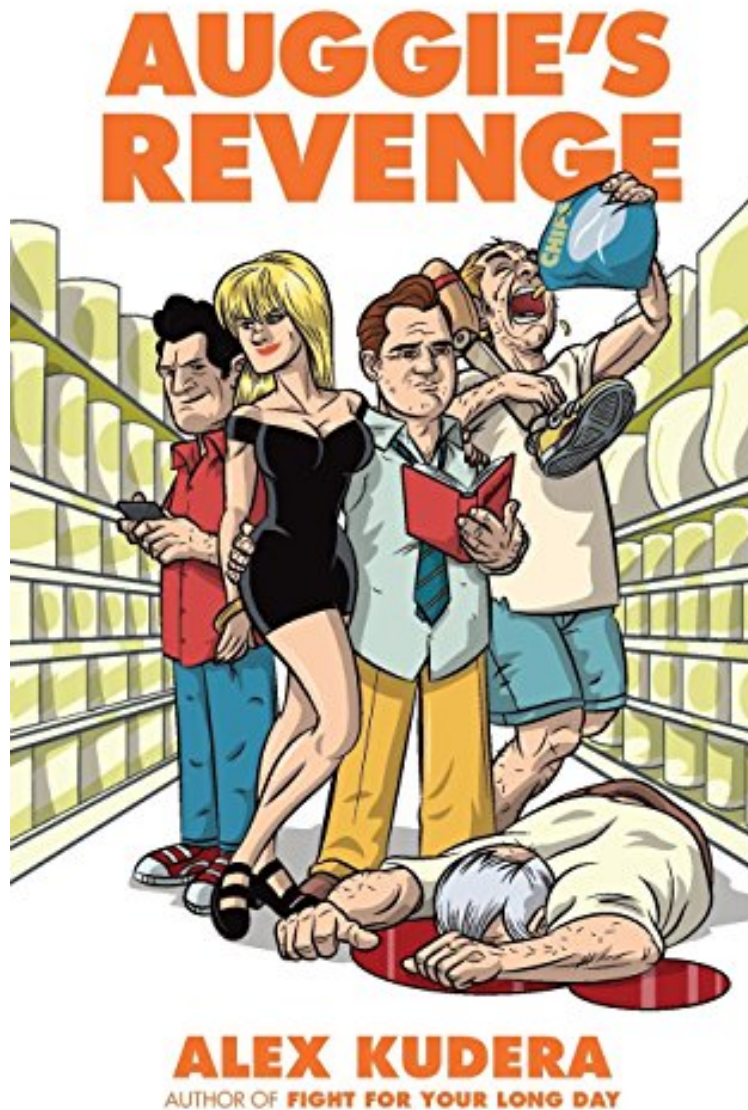


Auggie's Revenge

Alex Kudera

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Alex Kudera : Auggie's Revenge before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Auggie's Revenge:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. When Opposites Attract: An Adjunct Takes to the StreetsBy Joseph A. DominoThe adjunct professor rarely appears in fiction. Alex Kudera introduced Cyrus Duffleman in Fight for Your Long Day (2011), among other things, a commentary on pay inequity in academia. Of course, it is more than that.

Cyrus knows the system is corrupt, but he also knows he's a willing participant, so he is answerable only to his own conscience. In Auggie's Revenge, we meet Michael Vittinger, an adjunct subsisting on the fringes of academia just like Cyrus. Here, however, life gets a little more desperate, edgier, after an off-campus encounter. He meets Auggie, a corrupt individual who stalks the larger outside world, on the make, hustling. Just like the college administrations who hustle to grab students' money and dispense as little as possible to faculty. So, they may seem like opposites, sharing participation in corruption, even if Michael is a bit more passive. But Auggie knows full well, "We were the ones who slipped through the cracks." Many of us have known or have even been friends with an Auggie, and we often can't explain why, though we know it sometimes occurs in romantic relationships. For adjuncts and other underpaid laborers a void exists, that of the lack of professional status. Auggie occupies the dark underbelly of society and mounts a crusade of revenge. When Michael reflects on his academic "career," he is so ambivalent with a "flat affect," as to be almost literally untethered. The chance encounter with Auggie is like being caught in the wake of a purposeful vessel, but in Auggie's case it's more like a pirate ship. Unfulfilled, Michael has a void, so Auggie fills it. As such, Michael becomes obsessed with Auggie's tragic story about his childhood: sodomized by an abusive step-dad who took his inheritance when his mom passed from cancer. Auggie's "abuse stories" influence Michael "so that it infects [his] entire syllabus." Then there is the association with one of Auggie's "friends," a Jonny November, a kind of nihilist with a lengthy rap sheet, who likes to rob packages off front porches. He isn't much of a philosopher, but that philosophy is all-encompassing: "Life is short." And his little parable about a retired man who passed out in his garage partially face-down in his cat's dirty litter: "That's it. A life. Death in the s***." Auggie brings Michael to visit Jonny and Auggie re-tells the sad story of his childhood. Michael then blurts out: "We could kill him." "[M]urder as justice," he concludes. Once Michael turns this corner, his newfound sense of purpose allows himself to jettison his association with colleges. So, there are parallel stories here; besides the revelation of a murder plot and socioeconomic blight in general and the ripping off by the adjunct system in particular. So, the plot's afoot, and a fourth member is added to the crew: an erstwhile former student girlfriend of Michael's named Melony, who is to lure the victim. Melony, not on stage for much of the story, proves superficial, if enthusiastic about the plan: "It was like the coolest idea, like one of those 'efficiencies' Sarah Palin is always talking about...we'd save time...and execute justice...So, you know, this was going to be like the movies." The scheme does not go according to plan, but somehow, Michael seems to have the worst aftermath, as he is rendered homeless and wracked with regret, cut off from his tenuous connection with "normal society." At least the victim is put out of his misery, but Michael, now a fugitive, has descended to just about the lowest rung on the ladder when he suddenly decides he must crusade against all pedophiles and embark on one last desperate crusade. To Michael, sodomizing children is directly analogous to the rape committed by all corrupt institutions with their poverty engineering. The unspoken mantra driving society: "poor people have too much." Kundera's imagery and language are heightened with Michael's voice as he declares near the end, while invoking Rousseau, "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains, yes, and these chains do not always imply there are other human beings in a man's life. We grapple with rusted, flaking black steel alone; our manacles are not only self-inflicted but also self-preserving. For many of us, most, there is no "Other" keeping us down." 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Must Read for 2016 By Eric Gilliland Alex Kundera's follow up to his adjunct novel Fight For Your Long Day, Auggie's Revenge once again returns to the streets of Philadelphia. Adjunct Instructor of Philosophy Michael Vittinger is dating a sexy former student, befriended by angry pick up artist Auggie and con-artist/malcontent Jonny November. Auggie's Revenge focuses on Michael's life outside the classroom and the absurdity of being over educated in a dollar obsessed society. As Bruce Springsteen wrote in "Atlantic City": "Down here it's just winners and losers/And don't get caught on the wrong side of that line." This is a novel that directly engages with issues facing America in 2016 and beyond. Kundera's writing style is witty, mixing highbrow and lowbrow humor with the sensibility of a sharp satirist. It's also an important perspective of Higher Education rarely talked about in pop culture. Adjuncts barely make minimum wage and have no access to health care or benefits. Meanwhile, colleges rely more and more on adjunct labor. I highly recommend. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Intermixed reasonableness and absurdity By D. S. Atkinson The thing I like best of what I've read of Kundera's writing is how intermixed reasonableness and absurdity are. The present book is a prime example. I mean, the characters and what they do are completely ridiculous. However, you wouldn't find more normal people anywhere. Their reasonableness and their absurdity are completely bound up together, bringing home just how insane our modern society really is. It's smart, it's entertaining, and it's an engaging read. Kundera certainly has a keenly insightful grip on the economic and other aspects of the kind of lives many Americans likely lead. Some good stuff.

Down and out in America, with absurdity all the way. In the city of brotherly unemployment, Michael Vittinger shares an adjuncts' office far removed from any real or imagined full-time, tenure-track position. After more than a decade of teaching, Michael still lives paycheck-to-supermarket in a small studio apartment. Trapped between insomnia and omniphobia, Michael drifts into late-night, supermarket friendship with Auggie, an offensive pick-up artist, and Jonny November, a one-legged con man. Through their lessons on how to survive at the bottom rungs of Capitalism, Michael realizes the promise of working longer and harder to earn a position with health benefits and a 401k security blanket is

nothing but a Ponzi scheme - a shell-game run by the Capitalist-Education Complex to fill the prerequisite teaching positions with cheap, disposable, contract labor. Unable to face such a precarious future, Michael joins Auggie and Jonny in a revenge-robbery plot in the hopes of justice for Auggie and a pile of cash for each of them. Aided by Michael's significantly younger girlfriend, and former student, they set out to murder and plunder Auggie's abusive stepfather, who stole Auggie's inheritance and never served time for beating and molesting him. An eccentric "guys gone bad to do good" book, "Auggie's Revenge" is both a comic literary novel and a gritty crime thriller from the writer of the award-winning "Fight for Your Long Day," America's major novel on the pay-per-course adjunct issue.