

AUDREY UNDERGROUND

"Pilot"

Written by

Emily Ryan Lerner

emilyryanlerner@gmail.com
917-270-5543

October 18, 2018

AUDREY'S SKETCHBOOK - ILLUSTRATED SEQUENCE

Indie pop plays over QUICK CUTS of pages from a sketchbook.

- SEATTLE, 2002: The Space Needle, drawn in pencil.

AUDREY (V.O.)

Ever notice if you take the "a" out
of Seattle it spells "settle"?

- Line art of hip Seattle mainstays: vintage stores, bars,
coffee shops. An illustrated glimpse at the city before it
was colonized by condos and Amazon.com worker bees.

AUDREY (V.O.)

People associate this place with
rain, coffee, heroin-

- A drawing of an ambulance in the rain outside a Starbucks.

AUDREY (V.O.)

Which is fair. My neighborhood is
home to the first Starbucks someone
OD-ed in.

- More sketches. Not-so-young-anymore-but-still-working-hard-
at-being-cool bartenders, baristas, clothing store clerks.

AUDREY (V.O.)

But Seattle isn't just a great
place for addicts. It's also a
haven for burn-outs, losers, and
underachieving Gen-Xers who are so
afraid of success that anyone who
achieves any is labeled a "sell-
out." No one here wants to get over
the '90s-

- A sketch of a shitty house becomes-

EXT./EST. UNDERDOG COMICS - LATE AFTERNOON

A beat-up six-bedroom house in suburban NE Seattle. A rusted
out car in the driveway is spray-painted "UNDERDOG COMICS."

AUDREY (V.O.)

Because if they did? They'd have to
actually think about what the fuck
they're doing with the rest of
their lives.

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - CUSTOMER SERVICE - CONTINUOUS

A filthy basement (finished in the 70s, brown wall-to-wall shag, wet bar/kitchen area underneath stairs) has been retrofitted into a cramped, ramshackle office. Candy-colored iMacs sit atop a wooden board, the wall behind it is dotted with colorful fan art and scrawled letters. A landline rings.

WOMAN (O.C.)
Answer the phone, Audrey!

AUDREY (23, an unpolished smart-ass with depressive tendencies, a high opinion of herself, and very few marketable skills; a true artist) sits, pen hovering above her sketchbook. She glares at the ringing phone.

AUDREY
(calls off)
Washington state law entitles me to
10-minute rest breaks—
(then)
Maggggggggie?

MAGGIE (O.C.)
Peeing!

Audrey pulls on a headset, answers.

AUDREY
Good afternoon, Underdog Comics.

MALE CALLER (ON PHONE)
Hi. Is— is this uh, *Fervid* Comics?

AUDREY
If you want to split hairs over
corporate structure, sure, Underdog
Comics publishes *Fervid*.

A loud FLUSH — there's nothing corporate about this place.

MALE CALLER (ON PHONE)
So you sell... adult stuff?

MAGGIE (just 30, sprite-like, but tough as nails) exits the bathroom. Audrey pantomimes shooting herself in the head.

AUDREY
Yes.

MALE CALLER (ON PHONE)
(emboldened now)
Great.

(MORE)

MALE CALLER (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
 Because I've looked through your
 entire catalog and I'm not finding
 anything that suits my fetish.

AUDREY
 So you called to complain.

MALE CALLER (ON PHONE)
 Excuse me?

AUDREY
 Well, if you've looked through the
entire Fervid catalog and can't
 find a single thing—

MALE CALLER (ON PHONE)
 No, see, I'm looking for something
 that depicts vaginal penetration
 from behind. Not anal penetration.
 But vaginal, where the woman is on
 all fours, doggie style? What might
 you recommend?

AUDREY
 (wry)
 I'm not familiar with the content
 of our pornographic comic books,
 sir, but based on titles alone?
 Maybe you could try, I dunno: *From
 Behind, On All Fours*, or even
Doggie Style?

MALE CALLER (ON PHONE)
 But can you describe the sex acts
 in those comics? It needs to be—

AUDREY
 Right. Your fetish. The thing is,
 I'm not going to "describe sex
 acts." I make minimum wage and if
 it was actually my job to help you
 jerk off, I might be able to afford
 to subsist on something other than
 Lean Cuisines and the waning hope
 that one day I'll actually achieve
 my professional goals. In the
 meantime, what I can share is that
 all of these comics cost a mere
 \$3.50. So why not roll the dice and
 whip out your credit card?
 (silence)
 Sir?

The only thing audible on the line now is rhythmic slapping.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
Jesus fuck— hanging up!

MALE CALLER (ON PHONE)
(breathing heavily)
No wait—

Audrey disconnects and pulls off her headset. Maggie looks up from sorting a pile of mail.

MAGGIE
(knowing)
Aroused by your abuse?

AUDREY
You'd think I'd learn to be less irresistible.

All in a day's work. Audrey picks up her pen again to draw—

AUDREY'S SKETCHBOOK - ILLUSTRATED/ANIMATED SEQUENCE

A COMIC titled "FLASHBACK" comes to life in animation.

AUDREY (V.O.)
When I first applied to work at Underdog, I didn't expect to be talking to masturbators on a daily basis.

Sparsely illustrated frames: Animated Audrey sits across from Animated FRANK VISSER (late-40s, all bravado and bluster), he's labeled with an arrow: "Editor in Chief."

AUDREY (V.O.)
I just wanted to connect with Frank.

ANIMATED FRANK
You seem like you have a good—

A dotted line appears from Frank's eyes to Audrey's breasts.

ANIMATED FRANK (CONT'D)
Head on your shoulders.

Audrey's head drifts off her body like an untethered balloon.

AUDREY'S HEAD

Frank is Underdog Comics. A taste-maker, a staunch advocate of comics as an art form, and the dude responsible for the careers of some of my favorite artists.

Her head floats through frames of comic book art, drawn in the illustrative style of her independent comic book heroes: Art Spiegelman, R. Crumb, Dan Clowes.

AUDREY'S HEAD (CONT'D)

Artists I want to be like. And now Frank was responsible for my career. At least the start of it.

Audrey's head docks on her body, across from Frank again.

ANIMATED FRANK

And you're a comic book artist?

ANIMATED AUDREY

Aspiring. I do diary comics mostly—

ANIMATED FRANK

Uh-huh. We published diary comics by a woman once. Didn't sell.

ANIMATED AUDREY

But I'm also working on more substantive narratives. Stories that reflect the human condition.

ANIMATED FRANK

Interesting. I'm putting together a collection of up-and-coming artists in the new year — a showcase of sorts. You should submit work.

A thought bubble opens above Animated Audrey's head. In it a smaller, more cartoony version of Animated Audrey spins around and hops up and down, SO GIDDY.

ANIMATED AUDREY

I will. Totally. Thank you.

ANIMATED FRANK

So. The job.

The thought bubble bursts. The frame is sparse again.

ANIMATED FRANK (CONT'D)

Have you got any customer service experience?

ANIMATED AUDREY

I did seasonal work at Old Navy after college. At first I was embarrassed working retail, but then I remembered Janeane Garofalo is a manager at the Gap in *Reality Bites*, and that made me feel better. Until this guy from Banana Republic started acting like he was better than me...

ANIMATED FRANK

Would you say you're easily offended...

ANIMATED AUDREY

I guess it kinda hurt my feelings.

ANIMATED FRANK

...by mature material?

ANIMATED AUDREY

Oh. Not really. Why?

ANIMATED FRANK

Unfortunately, in the grand conflict of culture versus commerce, our rule-breaking sequential narratives don't exactly pay the bills. So if you're manning the phones it's likely you'll be dealing with customers from our *other* imprint, Fervid. That's Laz's department—

An Animated LAZ KOVACEVIC (50s, slovenly divorcee with floppy gray hair) pops up from a dark corner and waves like a dork.

ANIMATED LAZ

Hi! I edit comics that keep this place afloat. Frank stuck me in the dark recesses of the basement like his secret shame. I'm lonely.

ANIMATED FRANK

That work is more "graphic."

QUICK CUTS of Fervid's pornographic comic book art: fantasy women with impossible dimensions, flexing and bending in impossible ways.

ANIMATED FRANK (V.O.)

But there's a big market for it. Mostly in prisons.

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - CUSTOMER SERVICE - BACK TO PRESENT

Audrey stops drawing as Maggie hands her an envelope.

MAGGIE

Woo-hoo! Another one from a Georgia
correctional facility!

Audrey opens it with a jaunty flourish.

AUDREY

My word, and with a letter.
(looks)
Well hello barely literate
incarcerated porn-hound, don't you
have terrifying penmanship!

MAGGIE

(sings)
Audrey's got a boyfriend.

TEAGAN (29, bug-eyed girl with a pixie cut and a sleeve of comic book-inspired tattoos) slumps into the room.

TEAGAN

(with zero authority)
Hey, guys?

BUCKY (20s, black ponytail, nerdy but not in a cool way) follows Teagan. Audrey and Maggie ignore them.

AUDREY

(scanning letter)
This fine southern gentleman is
apparently cell-mates with a Native
American who does rituals with
blood and hair.
(to Maggie)
Double date!

TEAGAN

Guys?

MAGGIE

Sexy. What's he in for?

AUDREY

(reads, reverent)
"Shot a cop in the dick."

TEAGAN

You guys?

Bucky wolf whistles. Audrey and Maggie shut up, take notice.

TEAGAN (CONT'D)
This is Bucky.

Bucky waves. Audrey and Maggie eye him suspiciously.

TEAGAN (CONT'D)
He'll be helping out down here.

AUDREY
(eyes narrowing)
Why?

TEAGAN
Um, because I think you could maybe use more help with orders? And I'm the manager now, so—

MAGGIE
Audrey and I get the work done.

TEAGAN
Audrey just hung up on a customer.

AUDREY
He was masturbating.

TEAGAN
Well, maybe that won't be a problem for Bucky.

BUCKY
Uh—

MAGGIE
Where's he even gonna to sit?

Teagan pulls a chair out from a corner. A wheel comes off.

TEAGAN
He doesn't need a chair to file.
Bucky can help with filing.

AUDREY
Do we know Bucky knows how to file?

TEAGAN
(to Bucky)
Do you know how to file?

AUDREY
Alphabetically.

BUCKY
I know the alphabet.

TEAGAN
He knows the alphabet.

AUDREY
Uh huh. Then what comes
afterrrrr.... R?

BUCKY
(thinks about it)
S.

Teagan gives Bucky an awkward pat on the back.

TEAGAN
Welcome aboard. Buddy.

Teagan walks off. Audrey looks down at the letter again.

AUDREY
(reads)
"The cop still shits in a bag."

MAGGIE
Swoon.

INT. PHIL'S STATION WAGON - LATER

PHIL (32, textbook Gen X, dressed in a thin '70s western shirt) pilots his beat-up station wagon around the suburban neighborhood, Maggie in the front seat, Audrey in back. They pass a Coke can bong between them. The radio plays Top 40.

AUDREY
Frank only made Teagan "manager"
because he never expected anyone
would work in customer service for
six years.

MAGGIE
I mean, it's a steady job. But,
yeah...

PHIL
(exhales pot smoke)
Glad I moved upstairs to art direct
when I did. She's power hungry!

AUDREY
There's something going on with her
and Bucky. Remember when she got
all slap happy over that pen pal?

MAGGIE

(to Phil)

He sent her creepy handmade dolls
and vintage stickers.

AUDREY

Then Holly quit to go on tour and
Teagan said she might have a
"friend" to replace her?

PHIL

So?

AUDREY

Teagan doesn't have friends! I mean
when she said that, I half expected
her to hire one of her cats.

MAGGIE

Falkor and Bowie couldn't hack it
in the basement.

(inhales pot smoke)

But oh, could you imagine little
tiny cat headsets? Awwwwwwww.

AUDREY

Watch, now that Bucky's here? I bet
you the care packages stop.

The song on the car stereo ends and a Top 40 DJ barks—

DJ (ON RADIO)

— Blasting back to 1994 with a one-
hit wonder from Seattle's own
Spilled Milk — what ever happened
to *those* guys?

The drums of a grungy pop song crescendo on the speakers.

MAGGIE

PHIL it's your SONG! Tell us again
about the time you played the MTV
Beach House?

He knows she's teasing, but he's still beams, proud.

PHIL

Kennedy pushed me in the pool. My
flannel smelled like chlorine for a
whole week.

MAGGIE

God, you were fucking sellouts—
 (drums on the dash)
 But ooh that bass line!

He passes the Coke can back to Audrey, who takes a hit.

AUDREY

Bucky and Teagan's first date was
 definitely his job interview.
 (realizing)
 Shit. Do you think she's trying to
 replace me with Bucky? Oh God, is
 Teagan going to fire me?

MAGGIE

You're being paranoid.

AUDREY

I can't lose this job, I'm already
 behind on rent. And working here
 gives me credibility within the
 mini-comics scene, access to Frank,
 an opportunity to submit work—

MAGGIE

(exasperated)
 Finish your submission already.

PHIL

You really should get it to Frank.
 The book ships to the printer soon.

AUDREY

It's on my desk, almost done, but
 it needs to be perfect. And I don't
 want Teagan fucking this up for me.

MAGGIE

Teagan's just flexing her muscles.
 It's nothing.

Phil zones out, feeling his song, awash with happy memories.

PHIL

(very high now)
 Yeah. And nothing is anything until
 it's something.

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - CUSTOMER SERVICE - LATER

Audrey's on the phone with a MALE CUSTOMER, still stoned, she
 inputs order info on the iMac.

MALE CUSTOMER (ON PHONE)

And it's in Ann Arbor, Michigan.
That's A as in apple, N as in
Nancy, N as in Nancy. Space. A as
in apple, R as in Roger, B as in
boy, O as in Oscar, R as in Roger.
Then the abbreviation for Michigan.
M as in Mike. I as in Island.
48104, dash, 0970.

AUDREY

(smiles wickedly)

Great so that was 48104. D as in
David, A as in apple, S as in Sam,
H as in... Julio, 0970.

MALE CUSTOMER (ON PHONE)

No, no, no, no, no, no. You don't
spell the word "dash."

Audrey's grin becomes a wince. Something in her mouth aches—

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - BATHROOM - LATER

Audrey rinses her hands as she inspects herself in the
mirror, worried. She tries to replicate the pose of one of
the Betty Page-esque pin-ups taped to the wood paneling. Her
gums hurt. She pokes around with her tongue, concerned.

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - CUSTOMER SERVICE - MOMENTS LATER

Maggie points a desk light at Audrey, craning to see into her
mouth while Audrey searches with her fingers; they're both
still very high. Bucky files nearby, watching, skeptical.

AUDREY

Do you see anything?

MAGGIE

Your fingers are just—

AUDREY

Ow, ow, ow—

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Oh!

AUDREY

What?

MAGGIE

Your gums. They're red—

AUDREY

It's mouth cancer.

MAGGIE

It's not mouth cancer.

AUDREY

It's definitely mouth cancer.

(spiraling)

Shit. Is this is it for me? I thought I had more time, time to do my art, time to make my mark on the world. Now I'm just going to have to spend my remaining days fighting the rot in my decaying body-

MAGGIE

Doctors, the medical community, they can all help, I'll run a half marathon-

AUDREY

I'm going to lose all my hair and they'll have to remove a piece of my face and then? I'll just be a hairless half-faced shell who never got published by the world's premiere indie comix publisher.

MAGGIE

Creative success is overrated. And mouth cancer's not a thing-

BUCKY

My uncle died of throat cancer-

AUDREY

(realizes)

This is because I smoked drugs.

MAGGIE

It's not because you smoked drugs - I don't have mouth cancer! ...Do I have mouth cancer?

BUCKY

You guys smoked drugs?

AUDREY

Bucky! This is not the time to criticize our life choices. I'M PROBABLY DYING.

Phil exits from the bathroom, pulling a cigarette from behind his ear. Audrey spots him-

AUDREY (CONT'D)
Oooh Phil lemme get one?

INT. ORAL SURGEON'S OFFICE - EXAM ROOM - A FEW DAYS LATER

DR. FISHERMAN DDS (O.S.)
Then you've got the Axis of Evil
threatening our freedoms—
(ah-ha)
Well would you look at that...

The walls of the exam room are decorated with fish related-objects: a singing bass, a needlepoint that reads "I'd rather be fishing," photos of a jolly, red-faced DR. FISHERMAN, DDS, displaying his catch. Audrey's perched on a dentist chair. Dr. Fisherman, DDS in the flesh examines an X-Ray.

DR. FISHERMAN DDS (CONT'D)
Wisdom teeth! Impacted. All four of
them. They're in there pret-ty
deep. We'll need to book you for
surgery ASAP.

AUDREY
Can't you just do it today?

DR. FISHERMAN DDS
(amused)
Oh, no. The gals up front will fit
you into my schedule.

AUDREY
But I have a deadline, a full-time
job. I already had to take time off
to come here today.

DR. FISHERMAN DDS
Recovery can often take a week or
more. I'll prescribe Vicodin to
help you cope with the discomfort,
but you should take some sick days.

AUDREY
I really don't have time for this.

DR. FISHERMAN DDS
Wisdom teeth don't go away by
themselves—

AUDREY
And I don't have dental insurance.
How much will this all cost?

DR. FISHERMAN DDS
The gals at the front desk can
review payment plans.

AUDREY
A payment plan? You mean *debt*.
(mega-bummed)
Fuck me. I'd rather be fishing.

DR. FISHERMAN DDS
Oh, do you fish?

She hops off the chair, pissed.

AUDREY
(glares)
Of course not. Fishing is stupid.
And so is dentistry. You just make
holes and fill them. *Cool job, Doc!*

Off Dr. Fisherman's dismay-

AUDREY'S SKETCHBOOK - ANIMATED SEQUENCE

An illustrated LIST.

AUDREY (V.O.)
Things conspiring to undermine my
creative and professional success.

A drawing of FOUR ANGRY TEETH, dancing.

AUDREY (V.O.)
One. Genetics. Who needs an extra
set of molars in the twenty-first
century? No one! Get your shit
together, human evolution.

An ANGRY CLOCK.

AUDREY (V.O.)
Two. Time. Fuck you, time.

An ANGRY RINGING PHONE.

AUDREY (V.O.)
Three. My stupid fucking job...

EXT. UNDERDOG COMICS - AFTERNOON

Audrey trudges across the driveway to the basement stairs. From the picture window on the first floor, Phil spots her, points to his watch with a big, playful gesture. Audrey gives him double middle fingers and descends the basement stairs.

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - CUSTOMER SERVICE - MOMENTS LATER

Maggie talks into a headset, over it. Audrey blows in.

MAGGIE

I'd be happy to take your husband
off our mailing list, ma'am-

Maggie spots Audrey, puts her fingers on her lips ("shhh"), and hits the button for SPEAKER. The tinny voice of an IRATE WIFE fills the air.

IRATE WIFE (ON SPEAKER)

- is a good *Christian*. When this
FILTH showed up in our mailbox, you
can imagine my surprise.

MAGGIE

It will take 30 days to process the
request-

IRATE WIFE (ON SPEAKER)

Shame on you, selling *pornography*-

MAGGIE

Thanks so much for calling, Mrs.
Dinsmore.

Maggie hangs up, grins at Audrey.

AUDREY

You looked up his order history?

MAGGIE

Oh yeah. Loyal customer for over a
decade. Mr. Dinsmore's into some
sick shit too - girl-on-girl-on-
mutant, tentacle rape-

AUDREY

(mocks, finger wagging)
Heavens to Betsy!

They burst into cackles, then song, vamping as they sing.

MAGGIE

(sing-song)

*Mrs. Dinsmore, your husband is a
sexual deviant who reads
illustrated comic book porn!*

AUDREY

(adding a verse)

*Mrs. Dinsmore, you married a good
Christian sicko!*

Audrey turns to throw her stuff on the desk in the corner,
but Bucky occupies her usual chair.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

Get up.

BUCKY

I'm working—

AUDREY

At my desk.

She notices a row of action figures, grabs two.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

Seriously? You're all set up with
your little toys? C'mon, I've got a
stack of orders to get to. Up!

BUCKY

(intimidated)

Maybe you should talk to Teagan?

Audrey looks to Maggie, Maggie shrugs. Audrey stares Bucky
down a beat, then tosses the figurines at his head. He
catches them awkwardly as she stomps off.

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - INTERIOR OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Teagan cowers behind a ridiculously ornate carved desk in the
wood-paneled room off customer service.

TEAGAN

It's just, you weren't here.

AUDREY

For a few hours! I had a medical
emergency. And I have seniority. I
want to sit at my desk.

TEAGAN

Because it's the most private and
you can draw half the day?

AUDREY

(caught)
I get my work done.

TEAGAN

I'm just not sure you're 100%
committed to a positive customer
service experience.

AUDREY

When you trained me, we were both
laughing our asses off at these
disgusting mouth-breathers.

TEAGAN

But I'm the manager now. And I've
gotten some complaints... Plus,
Bucky said you were high at work?

AUDREY

So suddenly I'm not allowed to do
drugs at work anymore?

TEAGAN

I understand if you want to quit.

AUDREY

Oh and let you and your BOYFRIEND-

TEAGAN

He's not my boyfriend-

AUDREY

I don't have time to discuss your
personal life, Teagan. Just...
point me to a fucking desk.

TEAGAN

There's an empty one by Laz.

AUDREY

(crestfallen)
In the Fervid office?
(then)
Fine. But I am taking my headset-

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - CUSTOMER SERVICE - CONTINUOUS

Bucky talks into a headset as Audrey walks toward him.

BUCKY
 (into phone)
 And one *Butt Wonders*, Volume 2-

Audrey calmly rips the headset off Bucky's head and walks away. Frantic, he picks up the receiver.

BUCKY (CONT'D)
 (horrified)
 Hello? Sir?

Bucky touches his scalp, pained; she got some hair.

EXT. UNDERDOG COMICS - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Phil smokes as Audrey, headset in hand, paces.

AUDREY
 They're all caught up in this geeky
 amour fou, and I'm the asshole?

Phil points to long black hairs between Audrey's fingers.

PHIL
 Is that Bucky's hair?

AUDREY
 He took my desk! While I was at the
 fisherman dentist.
 (explaining)
 I need to get my wisdom teeth out.

PHIL
 Think you'll get any good drugs?

Bucky emerges from the basement. Audrey sneers.

BUCKY
 I managed to get that guy back on
 the phone. It was a huge order. In
 case you were worried.

AUDREY
 I wasn't.

BUCKY
 ...Well, I'm gonna grab a Cuban
 sandwich. You guys want anything?

AUDREY/PHIL
 No./No thanks, man.

Phil finishes his cigarette as Bucky walks off. Teagan comes out, forcing friendliness.

TEAGAN
Heading to Mojito. Want anything?

AUDREY
Bucky just asked us the same thing.

TEAGAN
Oh, is Bucky also getting Cuban food? I guess I'll see him there...

Teagan scuttles off, looking over her shoulder.

AUDREY
Those two aren't fooling anyone.

PHIL
(realizes)
Motherfucker!

AUDREY
What?

PHIL
A Cuban sandwich sounds really good right now.

AUDREY'S SKETCHBOOK - ILLUSTRATED/ANIMATED

Crude/childish illustrations of Bucky and Teagan in a variety of unflattering and awkward sexual positions, limbs flailing.

AUDREY (V.O.)
I'm on to you, Teagan and Bucky.

Bucky bends Teagan over, they go at it. Audrey provides their voices -- high pitch for Teagan, low for Bucky.

ANIMATED TEAGAN
Don't worry, my love. I banished Audrey to the Fervid office. No one can survive back there with sad Laz. We'll soon be rid of her.

ANIMATED BUCKY
Then we can be 100% committed to the customer service experience together.
(exerting himself)
Oh yeah, manage me, Teagan. Manage me harder!

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - FERVID OFFICE - LATER

Audrey chuckles to herself as she puts the finishing touches on a sketch of Bucky and Teagan climaxing.

LAZ

Someone's having a good time.

Across from her at a desk crowded with proofs, LAZ, Fervid's porn editor, watches Audrey draw. He's not accustomed to sharing his space. Or talking to women.

AUDREY

Washington state law entitles me to 10-minute rest breaks-

LAZ

I mean, you should have a good time. It's the advantage of being in the back. The disadvantage is that no one can hear you scream-

(off Audrey's concern)

I know because the other week I got trapped behind a shipment of *Doggie Style* for a few hours-

(off her smirk)

I had a panic attack and got severely dehydrated. It's funny now...

(keep her interested)

What are you drawing?

AUDREY

Just a diary comic-

LAZ

You're an artist? How wonderful!

AUDREY

Well, it's not like it pays the bills or anything.

LAZ

I know all about that. I had a strip in the Los Angeles Reader a while back, *Ricky and Fuzz*? Maybe you've heard of it?

(no, but he's sentimental)

Couple a goofball anthropomorphic rats. Always on the hunt for babes and booze.

AUDREY

I'm more into the kind of thing Frank publishes. Longer form. Substantive. I'm actually working on a submission for his showcase of up-and-coming artists. Raw, serious work. About the human condition.

She turns the page away from her obscene drawings.

LAZ

Amazing! I'm proofing that for Frank now. Do you use a pseudonym? I didn't notice any women in the Table of Contents.

AUDREY

(stricken)

There's a Table of Contents? Is the book... done?

LAZ

Well, not until it goes to the printer, but it's in great shape.

(a little bummed)

I tried to get him to include some of my new stuff... No such luck.

AUDREY

Maybe you just don't count as up-and-coming?

LAZ

I guess. But the way I see it, you're never too old to be an overnight success!

Off Audrey, pitying him.

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

It's wet. Audrey spots Phil's station wagon. She taps on the passenger side window, he rolls it down.

AUDREY

Fucking bus. You headed toward Capitol Hill?

PHIL

Belltown.

AUDREY

Close enough.

She goes to open the car door. It's locked.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
You can have some of my Vicodin.

INT. PHIL'S STATION WAGON - LATER

Audrey stares out the window as Phil drives past the motels of Aurora Ave. Moody guitar rock plays low on the car stereo.

AUDREY
I heard Kurt Cobain used to get high over here.

PHIL
That's hardly a rare claim to fame.

AUDREY
(attempts a joke)
Nirvana. What ever happened to those guys?

PHIL
I met him once. When my band played the Off Ramp. He bought a T-shirt. Almost wore it on the cover of SPIN.
(bitter)
Courtney made him change it.

Audrey pulls a sheaf of printouts from her bag.

AUDREY
By the way, Teagan and Bucky? Definitely fucking.

PHIL
What is that?

AUDREY
Proof. I printed out her e-mails while the lovebirds were on their "clandestine" Cuban lunch date. And they. Are. Good.
(reads)
From Bucky. "I can't wait to get you on the floor and put my blank in your blank."

PHIL
Why are you censoring it?

AUDREY

I'm not! They literally put blanks
in all of their e-mails!

PHIL

They're just exchanging keystrokes.

AUDREY

Mostly the underscore key.
(thumbs through, reads)
From Bucky: "When I touch your
blank my blank gets blank."

PHIL

That could be totally innocent.
(thinks)
When I touch your toaster my bread
gets burned?

AUDREY

It's like MadLibs for sexually
awkward fucktards. I could show
these to Frank-

PHIL

When are you going to show him your
comic?

AUDREY

(defensive)
Soon. I'm basically done, but it
needs to be right. Because what
happens if I show it to him before
it's ready, he *likes* it, publishes
me, and I get famous for stuff
that's not my best work? Then I'm
stuck cranking out mediocre work
for fans I don't even respect.

PHIL

You don't get to choose how people
react to what you put out in the
world. But if you never put
anything out?

AUDREY

I can just continue to be the
secret creative genius I know I am
without anyone ever judging me for
being less than that?

PHIL

Or you could, you know, take a risk
and accept that you might fail
before you succeed.

This lands but Audrey doesn't want to admit it.

AUDREY

How dare you.

PHIL

Whatever. What do I know. I'm just
a one hit wonder who got famous for
something mediocre, right?

The dissonant guitar on the radio swells as Phil pulls up to—

EXT. BILTMORE APARTMENTS - CONTINUOUS

An ivy covered apartment building across from a Starbucks.

AUDREY (O.S.)

You didn't have to drive me home.

INT. PHIL'S STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

Audrey gets out of the car.

PHIL

I know. But now you can finish your
comic. And you can't blame the bus,
or me, or anyone but yourself if
you don't get it done.

AUDREY

(touched)
Fuck you, Phil.

PHIL

(grins)
Don't forget my pills.

INT. BILTMORE APARTMENTS - AUDREY'S STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Audrey walks into her apartment — a sparsely decorated studio
with thrift store furniture and ironically tacky art. She
drops her stuff, hits play on an AIWA multi-disc CD player.

She heads for a large closet and pulls on a light, a '90s era
SONG plays over the following sequence:

INT. BILTMORE APARTMENTS - AUDREY'S CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Audrey surveys the large closet, resolute. There's a desk set-up with a drawing board with a pristine piece of paper. She considers the blank page - she hasn't even begun her comic.

INT. BILTMORE APARTMENTS - AUDREY'S KITCHEN - LATER

Audrey sits perched on her kitchen counter, smoking a cigarette out the window, rubbing her sore jaw.

INT. BILTMORE APARTMENTS - AUDREY'S CLOSET - LATER STILL

Audrey paces in and out of the closet, deep in thought. The page is still blank. She pulls the light off.

EXT. LINDA'S TAVERN - VERY LATE

The venerable cowboy themed bar glows in the damp night.

INT. LINDA'S TAVERN - SAME

Audrey sits at the bar alone, polishing off a gin cocktail. It's not her first and her eyes blur. She spins around on the barstool and takes in the scene: a drunk crowd, the tattooed and pierced detritus of the grunge era. She fits right in. The SONG ends.

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - FERVID OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Audrey sorts paperwork, hungover, trying to tune out Laz as he talks at her, now overly familiar.

LAZ

You probably look at me and see this middle-aged dude, working in a basement and think, "weak sauce." But I used to make the scene.

(he waves his arms)

This isn't what I had planned, but when Diana filed for divorce? A strip in the alt weekly didn't cover child support. Frank knew about my Tijuana Bible collection, threw me a bone and, way I see it?

(MORE)

LAZ (CONT'D)

I still get to work with comics every day and I can hire my cartoon pals to draw dirty pictures at a great page rate. And that's damn cool if you ask me.

AUDREY

(under her breath)

Is it though?

LAZ

Sometimes you don't end up where you expected. And now here you are.

AUDREY

Well, I'm still on my way to where I'm expecting to go, so-

LAZ

But it's all coming back to me. What it's like to be really *in* it, inspired, living for the art, even if it means making compromises. Hell, I mortgaged my house to self-publish a *Ricky and Fuzz* collection. Still have a few hundred in my garage. I'll bring you a box!

AUDREY

That's really not-

LAZ

It's crazy, but when we first met I felt like we actually knew each other *before*. And I've been wracking my brain; was it through the alt weekly? At a surf rock concert? A dream? Then it hit me -

Audrey looks up, concerned.

LAZ (CONT'D)

You remind me of myself!

Audrey can't quite conceal her horror at this comparison. The phone rings. She springs to answer it-

AUDREY

Underdog!

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - INTERIOR OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Audrey confronts Teagan with a sheet of paper.

AUDREY

I just got a call from a loyal
pervert named Leonard. And he was
none too pleased that his giant box
of spank material never arrived.
Turns out Mr. Customer Service
shipped a box of porn using 2-day
UPS. And the box never came - pun
intended. Want to guess why?

(pause for effect)

Because Bucky sent it to a PO box!

(off Teagan's look)

UPS doesn't deliver to PO boxes!

TEAGAN

Okay...

AUDREY

Bucky. Fucked. Up.

TEAGAN

(starts typing)

I'll send an e-mail reminding
everyone to check the ship method.

AUDREY

An email? Actions have consequences
Teagan. This was a blatant
disregard for the customer service
experience.

TEAGAN

Everyone makes mistakes, Audrey.

Audrey steps back with exaggerated gall.

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - CUSTOMER SERVICE - MOMENTS LATER

Audrey hops up to sit on the edge of Bucky's desk. She turns
a lamp on him, playing gumshoe. Maggie inputs orders nearby.

AUDREY

Name Leonard Marlow mean anything
to you?

MAGGIE

(sings)

Leo-nard Mar-low!

BUCKY

No.

AUDREY

You and Lenny had a phone chat the other day that cost this company real money. You read the e-mail? From Teagan?

Bucky opens his e-mail. Scanning, worried.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

She doesn't mention you but if you read between the lines? It's for you. You got sloppy, Bucky-boy.

BUCKY

How?

AUDREY

Picked the wrong shipping method when sending to a PO BOX. You really ought to be more careful. When you fill in THE BLANKS.

BUCKY

...The blanks?

AUDREY

Did you blank on the right procedure?

Maggie clocks Bucky's growing discomfort, she's sympathetic.

MAGGIE

Hey, Aud. Maybe lay off?

AUDREY

Wow. So now you and Bucky are best buds too? Perfect. I wish you a lifetime of happiness together.

MAGGIE

C'mon, Bucky's been doing a great job. He files fast, the customers are barely jerking off-

AUDREY

But this is about integrity. Taking responsibility, doing what you say you're going to do when you say you're going to do it.

MAGGIE
Hm, *integrity*.

AUDREY
What's that supposed to mean?

MAGGIE
How's your comic for Frank coming?

AUDREY
(wounded)
I'm working on it.

MAGGIE
Right. You act like you're some big deal artist who's better than this, but we all have the same job down here. And there's nothing wrong with earning a paycheck.

BUCKY
(musters courage)
What gives you the right to be so openly contemptuous of everyone?

AUDREY
That's literally the only perk of this job, Bucky!

Audrey spins on her heels and storms up the stairs—

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - UPSTAIRS OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Phil looks up from a giant computer screen in the sunlit front room as Audrey huffs upstairs.

PHIL
Hey! How'd drawing—

Audrey breezes past him, determined—

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - FRANK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Audrey maneuvers her way past stacks of files, comics, graphic novels, and finds her way to a chair across from FRANK. He looks up from his desk, raises an eyebrow, somewhat intrigued and amused by this bold interruption.

FRANK
Well, hello. To what do I owe this interruption...

AUDREY

Audrey.

FRANK

Yes, of course. Audrey.

AUDREY

(deep breath)

Well, I've been working downstairs for a little while now but I just wanted to come up here to let you know that I'm more than just a customer service person—

FRANK

You're the one with the band.

AUDREY

(thrown by this)

No... I'm a comic book artist. We talked about it when you hired me? And you invited me to submit to the new collection, of up-and-comers?

FRANK

Yes, I'm finalizing that now.

AUDREY

So it's—

FRANK

Done. A very strong show of talent too. One kid we're featuring started out publishing comics on his website. Do you have a website?

AUDREY

...No.

FRANK

You should make a website. The internet is the future, Audrey.

Frank's computer screen blinks and catches his eye. He reads an e-mail distractedly.

AUDREY

Cool. A website. Thanks, Frank.

Audrey walks out.

INT. UNDERDOG COMICS - UPSTAIRS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

She passes Phil; he heard everything. Her eyes well with tears but she ignores his warm smile and descends the stairs.

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Audrey stands in the rain, impatient and unhappy, waiting for the bus. Phil drives up and rolls down his window.

PHIL
Need a ride home?

AUDREY
I'm going to the U-District. Have to buy a stupid website at Kinkos.

PHIL
Rock n' Roll Kinkos? Right on. We used to make our gig posters there.
(then)
But if you want you could come compute at my place. I've got high-speed wireless...

Audrey perks up at this.

PHIL'S STUDIO APARTMENT - LATER

Audrey sits on a futon with a heavy 2001 Mac Powerbook propped on her lap. Phil rummages in his fridge.

PHIL (O.C.)
I haven't got a lot to offer-

AUDREY
Bet you say that to all the girls.

Phil walks in and hands her a red Solo cup of water.

PHIL
(apologetic)
Johanna took the dishes.
(then)
I'm glad you came over. Kinkos can get pretty dicey at night.

AUDREY

Yeah, last time I was there this homeless guy just kept shoving staplers in his pants and announcing it was his branch office. And it takes forever to do anything in my apartment, my internet is all-

Audrey does her best impression of a dial-up modem. Phil chuckles, then Audrey lunges for him, planting a kiss on his lips. He pulls away, genuinely surprised-

PHIL

Oh. I didn't think you...

AUDREY

Well, you invited me here?

PHIL

Because, the internet-

AUDREY

Shit. Are you not-

He kisses her back. They fumble, making out awkwardly, never finding a rhythm as they shift to get comfortable on the futon (an impossible task). They pull off their own shirts clumsily. Phil unbuckles his pants.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

(breathless)

Wait. Have you got a condom?

Phil springs to his feet and rushes to the bathroom. The sound of cabinets being opened and closed. He's frantic.

PHIL (O.S.)

Fuck! I thought I had some-

AUDREY

(sweetly practical)

You could maybe go to the store?

Phil's already hopping back into pants. He reaches for a helmet, pulls a bike from the wall, halfway out the door.

PHIL

I can bike to Bartells and be back in five, don't go anywhere!

The door slams and Audrey sits on the futon in a bra, alone. Now what? She stands to give herself a tour of the apartment:

- Above the bed a framed gold record hangs on the wall. It's the only decoration. 500,000 units sold.

- Inside the refrigerator. A Brita pitcher, eggs, several unopened boxes of Polaroid film.

- The medicine cabinet is cluttered with half empty prescription pill bottles.

Audrey returns to the blinking cursor on the laptop and checks the Internet Explorer browser history - the names of XXX website names fan out and fill the screen.

She recoils, closes it abruptly and reaches for her T-shirt just as Phil flies through the door, sweaty. He throws his bike down, and holds the box of condoms aloft, triumphant.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Condoms!

Audrey hesitates but he sweeps her up in a kiss, picking up where they left off. They make their way to the bed, finding more of a rhythm now. She slides her hand into Phil's boxers.

AUDREY

Are you... ready?

PHIL

Uh, yeah, hang on- one more thing... wanted to show you something.

Phil hops off the bed, opens the closet door and drags out a combo TV/VCR, setting it on the dresser. He plugs it in, inserting a well worn VHS tape. The SCREEN lights up: it's cued to a recording from MTV, a chipper VJ throws to The Spilled Milk music video. Phil's radio hit plays over grainy super 8 footage of a younger Phil and his band, goofing around on a bridge.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Where were we?

Phil positions Audrey on all fours, facing the TV, before climbing behind her. The light of the music video flashes across Audrey's amused face.

INT. BILTMORE APARTMENTS - AUDREY'S STUDIO APT - LATER

Audrey walks in, opening mail: an estimate for a payment plan for oral surgery, a second notice on a credit card bill, a warning from the building manager regarding rent. She puts on music, heads into the closet, and considers the blank pages.

INT. BILTMORE APARTMENTS - AUDREY'S STUDIO - LATER STILL

Audrey up late, desk lamp on, cigarette in her mouth, drawing comics. She's in creative flow, actually enjoying herself, and laughing as she works.

AUDREY'S COMIC BOOK PAGES - ILLUSTRATED/ANIMATED

An ANIMATED PHIL positions ANIMATED AUDREY on all fours. As they have sex-

ANIMATED AUDREY
The things I do for high-speed
internet...

FADE TO BLACK.