

Notes for Podcast: "Super Goat Man" by Jonathan Lethem

There is a sense in which the title says it all. Super heroes are sort of inherently ridiculous outside of the world in which they exist. Most of them run around in brightly colored spandex with accessories such as super wide belts, masks, capes, and strange insignia. They don't seem to have real jobs and they have a pretty simple world view. And here we have Super Goat Man, who isn't very super, very famous, or very good at saving people or fighting evil. He's a third-rate hero with a failed career.

He does have a day job, however. He's a college professor with an inclination to have affairs with his students and with other people's wives. And Everett, our viewpoint character, has a history with him.

From the comic books, to the party at the commune, to his years at college, to his new wife and his new job, Super Goat Man seems to haunt Everett's life.

The world of the story seems to be one that has actual super heroes, though we don't hear much about them.

Super Goat Man's failure to rescue the drunk college students is the central incident in the story.

Read 203- 04, then 205-06

Questions:

Is it fair to blame SGM for this failure?

Everett seems to resent or even hate SGM. Why do other people seem to like him?

Is SGM a good guy or a bad guy? What is SGM about to reveal to Everett in the final scene of the story?

Is Everett justified in his final act of cruelty?