



Chronic City (Vintage Contemporaries)

By Jonathan Lethem

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A New York Times Book Review Best Book of the Year.

A searing and wildly entertaining love letter to New York City from the bestselling author of *Motherless Brooklyn* and *Fortress of Solitude*.

Chase Insteadman, former child television star, has a new role in life—permanent guest on the Upper East Side dinner party circuit, where he is consigned to talk about his astronaut fiancée, Janice Trumbull, who is trapped on a circling Space Station. A chance encounter collides Chase with Perkus Tooth, a wily pop culture guru with a vicious conspiratorial streak and the best marijuana in town. Despite their disparate backgrounds and trajectories Chase and Perkus discover they have a lot in common, including a cast of friends from all walks of life in Manhattan. Together and separately they attempt to define the indefinable, and enter into a quest for the most elusive of things: truth and authenticity in a city where everything has a price.

"Full of dark humor and dazzling writing" --*Entertainment Weekly*

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Chronic City (Vintage Contemporaries) By Jonathan Lethem Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best of the Month, October 2009: Jonathan Lethem, the home-grown frontrunner of a generation of Brooklyn writers, crosses the bridge to Manhattan in *Chronic City*, a smart, unsettling, and meticulously hilarious novel of friendship and real estate among the rich and the rent-controlled. Lethem's story centers around two unlikely friends, Chase Insteadman, a genial nonentity who was once a child sitcom star and now is best known as the loyal fiancé of a space-stranded astronaut, and Perkus Tooth, a skinny, moody, underemployed cultural critic. Chase and Perkus are free-floating, dope-dependent bohemians in a borough built on ambition, living on its margins but with surprising access to its centers of power, even to the city's billionaire mayor. Paranoiac Perkus sees urgent plots everywhere--in the font of *The New Yorker*, in an old VHS copy of *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*--but *Chronic City*, despite the presence of death, politics, and a mysterious, marauding tiger, is itself light on plot. Eschewing dramatic staples like romance and artistic creation for the more meandering passions of friendship and observation, *Chronic City* thrives instead on the brilliance of Lethem's ear and eye. Every page is a pleasure of pitch-perfect banter and spot-on cultural satire, cut sharply with the melancholic sense that being able to explain your city doesn't make you any more capable of living in it. --Tom Nissley

From Publishers Weekly

SignatureReviewed by Arthur NersesianJonathan Lethem's work has gone from postapocalyptic sci-fi to autobiographical magical realism. In *Chronic City*, he weaves these elements together, blending a number of actual recent events to create his own surreal urban landscape. The nearly mythological construction of the Second Avenue Subway spawns a strange destructive tiger that defies capture as it transforms the old city into a scary new one. A pair of eagles illegally squatting on an Upper East Side windowsill are summarily evicted. Best of all is the economic abyss that one once encountered above 125th Street. Here, Lethem has dropped a manmade fjord, a performance art chasm.At the heart of this city is former child star Chase Insteadman. Lately, he is better known as a celebrity fiancé to fatale femme astronaut Janice Strumbull, who is stuck in orbit because of Chinese satellite mines. Lately, though, his greater concern is his friend Perkus Tooth. Perkus is a pauper scholar, a slightly delusional Don Quixote character whose windmills are called chaldrons, imagined vases that bring inner peace. Somewhat like the tragic poet Delmore Schwartz who Saul Bellow fictionally eulogized (and Lethem acknowledges) in *Humboldt's Gift*, Tooth cuts with equal parts genius and madness. Though he never really rises above a plasterer of broadside rants, he's a recognizable artifact of New York circa 1981. Between bong hits—yes, for you potheads, Chronic is his favorite brand—and downtown cultural references, conspiracy theories hiccup from Perkus's lips. A prevalent notion he has is that our reality is nothing more than a facsimile, a simulation of a hidden reality. Perkus's hyperactive brain only pauses when he lapses into his periodic ellipse—a kind of revelatory break. The only problem is his breaks are gradually increasing in frequency. Inasmuch as Perkus is a personification of the old New York and its highly endangered culture, Insteadman finds a moral duty to protect him. If Perkus is Insteadman's moral conscience, Richard Abneg, an opportunistic politico, is Insteadman's naked ambition. Though Abneg started as an East Village anarchist, through intellect and arrogance he rose to become a powerful aide to Mayor Arnaheim (a Giuliani-Bloomberg hybrid). Now he's dismantling the rent stabilization laws he once championed. Eventually, these two work together to save Perkus.Though *Chronic City* at times requires patience, it is a luxuriously stylized paean to Gotham City's great fountain of culture that is slowly drying up. Like the city itself, the book sways toward the maximal, but its prose shines like our skyline at sunset. The key to his city lies in the very notion of reality: Chase Insteadman's moniker implies that this former actor is now just a stand-in for a greater (perhaps former) reality. By the conclusion, I found myself wondering if Lethem hadn't originally written a shorter simulacra of *Chronic City*, when it was just

an Acute City. From him I would expect no less. *Arthur Nersesian is author of The Sacrificial Circumcision of the Bronx (book two of the Five Books of Moses). His next novel, Mesopotamia, a thriller, is due out next year.*

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Given the offbeat touches in his subject matter—one need look no further than the homicidal, bioengineered kangaroo stalking the author's protagonist in his debut novel, *Gun, with Occasional Music*—Jonathan Lethem is bound to engender both unbridled admiration from existing fans and more than a few raised eyebrows from critics and new readers. Reviews of *Chronic City* vary wildly, though Lethem's trademark sense of humor and flights of fancy work here, even when the story and its characters lose steam in some of the more ponderous, "insider" passages and pop-culture references. That Lethem's latest effort elicits so many—and such differing—views, however, suggests his importance as an innovator who constantly expands the boundaries of literary fiction. Here's hoping there's better balance in his next novel.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Holly Taylor:

Book is to be different for every single grade. Book for children until finally adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important for people. The book *Chronic City* (Vintage Contemporaries) ended up being making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is quite advantages for you. The e-book *Chronic City* (Vintage Contemporaries) is not only giving you considerably more new information but also to become your friend when you truly feel bored. You can spend your spend time to read your guide. Try to make relationship with the book *Chronic City* (Vintage Contemporaries). You never sense lose out for everything in case you read some books.

Lori Parker:

This *Chronic City* (Vintage Contemporaries) book is just not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book will be information inside this book incredible fresh, you will get details which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. This kind of *Chronic City* (Vintage Contemporaries) without we recognize teach the one who studying it become critical in imagining and analyzing. Don't always be worry *Chronic City* (Vintage Contemporaries) can bring when you are and not make your tote space or bookshelves' become full because you can have it inside your lovely laptop even cellphone. This *Chronic City* (Vintage Contemporaries) having excellent arrangement in word as well as layout, so you will not feel uninterested in reading.

Nancy Harris:

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