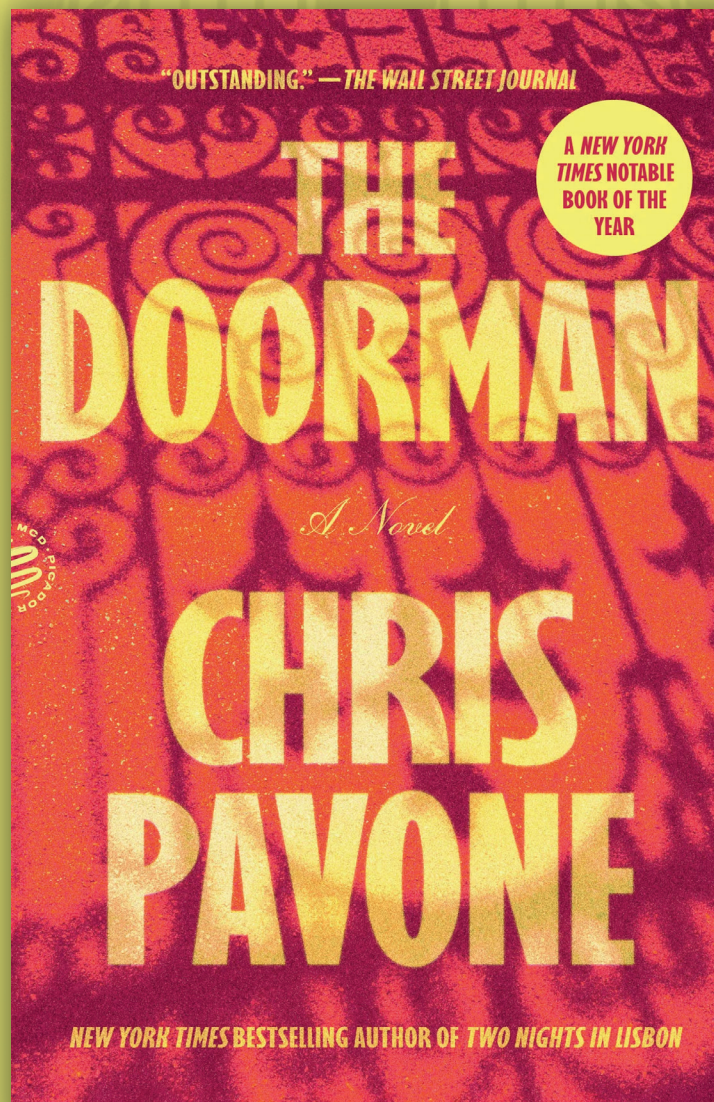


# THE DOORMAN

## READING GROUP GUIDE



**A *New York Times* Notable Book of 2025 • Named one of the Best Thrillers and Mysteries of the Year by *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Elle*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Air Mail*, and more**

**A pulse-pounding novel of class, privilege, sex, and murder, from the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Two Nights in Lisbon* and *The Expats***

Chicky Diaz is everyone's favorite doorman at the Bohemia, the most famous apartment house in the world, home of celebrities, financiers, and New York's cultural elite.

Up in the penthouse, Emily Longworth has the perfect-looking everything, all except her husband, whom she'd quietly loathed even before the recent revelations about where all the money comes from. But his wealth is immense, their prenup is iron-clad, and Emily can't bring herself to leave him. Yet.

And downstairs in 2A, Julian Sonnenberg—who has carved himself a successful niche in the art world, and led a good half-century of a full and satisfying, cosmopolitan life—has just received a devastating phone call that does nothing at all to alleviate his sense that, probably for better and worse, he has aged out and he's just not that useful to anyone any more.

Meanwhile, gathered in the Bohemia's bowels, the building's almost entirely Black and Hispanic, working-class staff is taking in the news that just a few miles uptown, a Black man has been killed by the police, leading to a demonstration, a counterdemonstration, and a long night of violence across the tinderbox city.

As Chicky changes into his uniform for tonight's shift, he finds himself breaking a cardinal rule of the job: tonight, he'll be carrying a gun, bought only hours earlier, but before he knew of the pandemonium taking over the city. Chicky knows that there's more going on in his patch of sidewalk in front of the Bohemia than anyone's aware of. Tonight in the city, enemies will clash, loyalties will be tested, secrets will be revealed—and lives will be lost.

This reading group guide for *The Doorman* includes discussion questions and ideas for enhancing your book club.

## **QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. In her *New York Times* review of *The Doorman*, Sarah Lyall writes, "With his eye for absurdity and ear for nuance, [Pavone] seems as if he's writing not from some elevated place high above the city, but from within it." How do you feel about the author's depiction of the city and these people? Is this what New York looks like to you?
2. There are three main characters in this book. Why is the title *The Doorman*? Did anything surprise you about Chicky's life or the specifics of his job? Have you ever known someone like Chicky?
3. *The Doorman* is a thriller with dramatic twists, paradigm shifts, and character reveals—"smart, twisty, and sharply written," says Karin Slaughter, with characters "intertwining their secrets, their private heartaches, and their fates," according to Jenny Jackson. Did you anticipate any of the twists? Which were most shocking?

4. ***The Doorman* also features moments of levity. Were there any scenes, lines, or characters that made you laugh? Did you particularly enjoy any of the minor characters?**
5. **Stephen King praises *The Doorman* as “cynical, tender, sharp, dense, funny, and loaded with inside dope about how New York works (and how it doesn’t). *The Doorman* is a *Bonfire of the Vanities* for the 21st century.” Did this book make you understand New York differently?**
6. **Ron Chernow describes *The Doorman* as an “irresistible read that captures, in personal terms, this terribly fraught moment in our nation’s cultural politics”; *The New Yorker* calls it a “politically attuned thriller.” How do you feel about the culture-war issues in *The Doorman*? Which characters’ viewpoints did you agree with or disagree with?**
7. **A Bohemia board meeting about security touches on antisemitism, racism, homophobia, and transphobia. Do you consider all these characters’ points of view valid? How do you define “woke,” and does the phrase apply to Julian? Or to any other characters?**
8. **How did you feel about the roles of race, racism, and class in the story? Did this book make you reexamine your own thinking about these issues?**
9. **Marriage is another central theme: Emily’s, Julian’s, Chicky’s. Emily “had accepted that she was making a deal, a compromise. But then she’d been bait-and-switched” (196). What bargains do these partners make with each other, and with themselves? Do you know people who have made the same choices? Which could you see yourself making?**
10. **Controversial details about Whit’s company are leaked to the public. How exactly do you think that leak happened? Does Whit’s business make him a villain? Or is the backlash unfair? Should Emily feel the need to defend her husband?**
11. **Characters come by their money in different ways: Justin Pugh is a mercenary, Hailey is a sex worker, Emily is married to a rich man from a long line of rich men. Are these all different points on the same continuum? Should people be judged by the way they make—or inherit—their money? Are some jobs more morally just than others? Is Julian’s? Is Chicky’s? How does class influence the way we judge people?**
12. **Emily volunteers widely, including at a food pantry. Is her true motivation to help other people, or is it really just to make herself feel better? Does it matter? Is there anything Emily should atone for, and does volunteering accomplish that?**
13. **Likewise, does virtue signaling play a role in Julian’s career, and is there anything wrong with that? Why does he make it a point to take public transportation to black-tie events? In what ways is he unlike other tenants of the Bohemia? Julian and Whit share many things, including the fear of becoming irrelevant. Is that feeling—and their response to it—justified?**
14. ***The Doorman*’s opening line suggests that, eventually, someone is going to get killed. Are you confident that you know how the final shootout came to pass? Was the robbery an inside job? Was there a conspiracy among any characters? What, if anything, was preplanned, and by whom?**
15. **Not everyone survives. Was justice ultimately served? Were those final acts morally defensible? Do you think any of the survivors should be held legally accountable for anything—bribery, obstruction of justice, manslaughter, murder, premeditated murder? Do you wish that the story ended differently?**

## ENHANCE YOUR BOOK CLUB

1. In a starred review of *The Doorman*, *Publishers Weekly* says, “Pavone delivers a lacerating, Tom Wolfe–worthy dissection of Manhattan society in the post-Covid era,” and Lee Child calls it “this era’s great state-of-the-city novel, up there with the very best of Tom Wolfe.” Stephen King, Griffin Dunne, *The New York Times*, *Boston Herald*, and *Financial Times* all compared *The Doorman* to *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. How are the two novels similar? Different? New York City is often the backdrop for other sharp social novels, including *The Great Gatsby*, *Rosemary’s Baby*, *Ragtime*, *Harlem Shuffle*, and *Pineapple Street*. How does *The Doorman* compare? Is it a New New York Novel? Are there other novels that should be in the same conversation?
2. From its inner workings of the staff to the beautiful apartments, the Bohemia is as fleshed-out as the characters. Learn more about New York’s famous apartment houses like the Apthorp, the Beresford, and the Dakota that inspired the Bohemia. Have you been in any of these? Which, if any, would you like to live in? Why?
3. Some of the locations in *The Doorman* are identified specifically, such as the opening scene’s sidewalk on Central Park West, the cobblestoned streets of SoHo, the subway, the supertall towers of Billionaire’s Row, and the final scene at the Bethesda Fountain. Find images of these real places, and follow along with the novel’s narrative. Other locations are not specifically identified—school, restaurant, museum, mansion—but can you figure out what might have inspired each? Can you find any other similarities or parallels to real-life characters or stories?
4. *The Doorman* evokes *The White Lotus* and *Succession*, with a hint of *Only Murders in the Building*. Would the book be better adapted as a film or a series? What large changes would need to be made for an adaptation? In the text, both Emily and Julian are compared to real-life actors. Do those actors match your vision for these characters? Who’s in the ideal cast?
5. To learn more about Chris Pavone and find out when he may be in a city near you, visit his official website at [www.chrispavone.com](http://www.chrispavone.com).



Photo by Beowulf Sheehan