



The Double Bind

Chris Bohjalian

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

The Double Bind

Chris Bohjalian

The Double Bind Chris Bohjalian

In Chris Bohjalian's astonishing novel, nothing is what it at first seems. Not the bucolic Vermont back roads college sophomore Laurel Estabrook likes to bike. Not the savage assault she suffers toward the end of one of her rides. And certainly not Bobbie Crocker, the elderly man with a history of mental illness whom Laurel comes to know through her work at a Burlington homeless shelter in the years subsequent to the attack.

In his moments of lucidity, the gentle, likable Bobbie alludes to his earlier life as a successful photographer. Laurel finds it hard to believe that this destitute, unstable man could once have chronicled the lives of musicians and celebrities, but a box of photographs and negatives discovered among Bobbie's meager possessions after his death lends credence to his tale. How could such an accomplished man have fallen on such hard times? Becoming obsessed with uncovering Bobbie's past, Laurel studies his photographs, tracking down every lead they provide into the mystery of his life before homelessness -- including links to the rich neighborhoods of her own Long Island childhood and to the earlier world of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, with its larger-than-life characters, elusive desires, and haunting sorrows.

In a narrative of dazzling invention, literary ingenuity, and psychological complexity, Bohjalian engages issues of homelessness and mental illness by evoking the humanity that inhabits the core of both. At the same time, his tale is fast-paced and riveting -- *The Double Bind* combines the suspense of a thriller with the emotional depths of the most intimate drama. The breathtaking surprises of its final pages will leave readers stunned, overwhelmed by the poignancy of life's fleeting truths, as caught in Bobbie Crocker's photographs and in Laurel Estabrook's painful pursuit of Bobbie's past -- and her own.

Behind *The Double Bind*

While Bobbie Crocker, the photographer in *The Double Bind*, is fictitious, the photographs that appear in the book are real. They were taken by a man named Bob "Soupy" Campbell, who, as Chris Bohjalian explains in his Author's Note, "had gone from photographing luminaries from the 1950s and 1960s to winding up at a homeless shelter in northern Vermont."

Bohjalian's viewing of Campbell's work after the photographer's death provided an inspiration for *The Double Bind*. "We tend to stigmatize the homeless and blame them for their plight," Bohjalian writes.

"We are oblivious to the fact that most had lives as serious as our own before everything fell apart. The photographs in this book are a testimony to that reality."

The Double Bind Details

Date : Published February 13th 2007 by Crown (first published January 1st 2007)

ISBN : 9781400047468

Author : Chris Bohjalian

Format : Hardcover 384 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Book Club, Contemporary

 [Download The Double Bind ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Double Bind ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Double Bind Chris Bohjalian

From Reader Review The Double Bind for online ebook

Lori says

Worth for the paint ball battle alone.

Stacey says

This is a very creative premise but egregiously flawed. Most of this book chronicles an investigation that the main character is conducting that links an old box of photos with a homeless man, her own troubled past, and *The Great Gatsby*. She was a lot more interested in where this all was leading than I was. I was sort of lazily interested in the *Gatsby* thread because I just read it, but the rest of it was so repetitive and tiresome I could only read 5-10 pages at a time. I did not like the main character--or any character, really--and I felt that I knew where it was going to end up. Around the last 1/4 of the book, though, you start to get a feeling that something else is going on and only then did I become invested in finishing it. Unfortunately, there's a big M. Night Shyamalan ending that was partially cool and partially incoherent and frustrating. It made me feel like I needed to read the book again, which I would never do unless under gunpoint. This also made me permanently terrified of running in the forest preserve, one of my favorite activities. Thanks for nothing, Chris Bohjalian.

Nick says

If you were to write a book with the same themes as *The Great Gatsby*, but set it today, what would it look like? What archetypes would you pick to represent the lost, lonely people? The man who tries to live the American dream but at the end finds himself staring at the light he can never reach? The woman who tells herself stories about who she is and how she got where she was only to help avoid the truth of the horror of her life? The death of the American Dream, and its salvation in the ordinary people who do their best to make a small difference amid the lies and hypocrisy of the world they live in?

Bohjalian pulls it off. This won't be the timeless classic that *Gatsby* is, but for anyone who loves and admires Fitzgerald's masterpiece, this book is a remarkable tribute that will lead you to even deeper understanding of the great American novel.

Carolyn says

Notice there are no stars associated with this review. If only there was a choice for black hole. This book was dreadful. Horrible. Awful. A few years ago I read his "Midwives", which I really liked, so I thought I'd like this too. Wrong! It is billed as a "literary thriller". Oh, really? I swear, the suspense and thrills are more elegantly crafted in an average episode of Scooby Doo than in this piece of crap book. And literary?? I think it was poorly written. It drove me to distraction the way the author avoided writing "she", but instead referred to people as thier occupation. I wonder how many times "the social worker" appeared in the book. Way too many. This book has gotten such good reviews; I just don't understand it. The main character is a social worker who works at a homeless shelter. One of the former clients dies and in his possession are photographs and Laurel (the social worker) takes an interest in them. The interest promptly turns to

obsession. The photos are of many subjects (famous people, etc), but Laurel recognizes a house from her hometown in one and guess what? It's the house from *The Great Gatsby*, and the people in the picture are the children of Tom and Daisy Buchanan. Laurel immediately and irrationally assumes/insists that the boy in the picture is the dead homeless man and she sets out to prove it and find out how he ended up homeless and alone. At first I thought bringing in characters from *The Great Gatsby* was an annoying plot device. And very lazy. Like dude, make up your own characters. It made no sense why the author chose to use those people and their story. And WHY was Laurel acting so crazy and pursuing this even though she had NOTHING to back up her assumptions. Oh, I forgot - When Laurel was in college she was attacked while riding her bike and saved from certain rape at the last possible moment, so she's still living with the aftereffects of that (even though it seems like she goes overboard about it at times). So we've got this chick acting all nuts and we've got *The Great Gatsby* crap going on, and I DO NOT CARE about the story or the characters. SPOILER ALERT - So why is Laurel acting like a loon? Oh, what, didn't the author bother to TELL us before the last chapter? It's because she IS crazy, silly. And she didn't ALMOST get raped and brutalized a few years ago. She really WAS raped and mutilated and left for dead. So see? There's a REASON she's acting so nutty. (incidentally, the exposition of the truth of her attack was presented very clumsily and I was offended reading about it.) Oh, and the reason that the *Gatsby* characters were in the book? It was all in Laurel's imagination. Those people aren't REAL, you fool! Now why were you thinking they were actual characters in the book you just read?? I'm getting mad again just thinking about this book. Boy, did I hate it. There's more to hate, but I guess I should wrap this up. Ok, there's one more reason I hated it, and it was because of the reader on the audiobook version. I listened to another book that Susan Denaker read, and she kind of annoyed me, but I got through it ok. This time, she bugged the hell out of me. The combo of the bad book and her voice created the perfect storm of hate. Her voice is very smooth and sounds well-trained and full and I wouldn't be surprised if she wins awards for it. But after a while it comes off as haughty and strident and she over-dramatizes and I don't think I will ever be able to listen to her again. Ever. Well, do you get the idea that I did NOT have a good experience with this book? I felt manipulated and used by the end, and the whole time I was irritated because things just didn't add up. The way it was all wrapped up at the end was rushed and seemed like an afterthought. Honestly, I do not understand why anybody liked it. Maybe if I had read it instead of listened to it I wouldn't have hated it so much, but I still don't think I would have liked it. Soooo - I have spent much more time and energy thinking about this bad book than I have ever spent on my favorite books. Why is that? I want to warn you! On the other hand I want you to read it and agree with me. On the other other hand I want you to read it and like it so I can hold you in contempt. Not really. Please, I beg you, even if you read it and do like it, I don't want to know!! Ok, I'm done.

Jonna Rubin says

Offensively bad. Poorly written and/or poorly edited -- likely both -- oh dear crap, it was awful. Overwritten. Stupid. Carelessly written. Used the word "dowager" at least five hundred times -- so much that I laughed out loud and wished I'd made a drinking game of it. And it was UNNECESSARY. Who edited this? Who allowed "epoxied" to stand in for "glued" three times on three consecutive pages in totally needless contexts? Who greenlighted "dowager" so many damn times? Who decided to refer to Laurel as "the social worker" in such a manner that it became absurdly confusing as to who THE HELL he was referring to?

No, really: I want to know who edited this. Has Chris Bohjalian reached such great heights that he doesn't NEED an editor? Because someone should tell him that he does. Someone should also have told him that he wrote better books than this in the past, and that maybe he should have trashed it and started over again at the drawing board.

The plot -- if you can call it that -- was so incredibly inane, the character(s) so unlikable, that I honestly didn't give a rip about what was happening. I don't even care enough to summarize it for you, because it

would be laughable, and explains why the book description didn't REMOTELY match what the story was about. Like, at all.

I slogged forward because I felt an obligation to make it through to the "twist" -- which I figured out at a stupidly early time, such was the sad transparency of what he'd written -- the whole time thinking, this better be one hell of a twist (perhaps one that did my laundry for me and served me crackers and cheese in bed) for me to feel AT ALL decent about having suffered through this piece of utter crap. (DOWAGER. JESUS CHRIST HE SAID IT A THOUSAND TIMES. EPOXIED. I EPOXIED MY FIST TO MY FACE OUT OF FRUSTRATION ABOUT THE DOWAGER USAGE. HOW IS THAT, CHRIS? SOUND GOOD? BECAUSE I DID.)

I am so distraught that I slogged through this that I ... I can't even articulate it without being a jerk, as I just finished it.

RUN. RUN AWAY. Awful. Awful awful awful.

Book Concierge says

Audiobook performed by Susan Denaker

From the book jacket When college sophomore Laurel Estabrook is attacked while riding her bicycle through Vermont's back roads, her life is forever changed. Formerly outgoing, Laurel withdraws into her photography and begins to work at a homeless shelter. There she meets Bobbie Crocker, a man with a history of mental illness and a box of photographs he won't let anyone see. When Bobbie dies, Laurel discovers that he was telling the truth; before he was homeless, Bobbie Crocker was a successful photographer. As Laurel's fascination with Bobbie's former life begins to merge into obsession, she becomes convinced that some of his photographs reveal a deeply hidden, dark family secret.

My Reaction

Well, this definitely went in a direction I was not expecting! I don't really want to say much more because I don't want to give anything away.

Bohjalian crafts a compelling and intricate scenario with layer upon layer of complexity. I loved the way he drew me in, made me believe in Laurel – and Bobbie – and then forced me to reconsider the veracity of their claims. Throughout the work I am intrigued by and sympathetic to both Laurel and Bobbie, and particularly to the former as Bohjalian tells most of the story from Laurel's perspective. The suspense builds relentlessly in the last five or six chapters, and I'm left breathless and drained at the end. And ... wanting to start over again to see what clues Bohjalian left that I missed the first time around.

In the Author's Note preceding the book, Bohjalian tells how he was inspired to write the novel when a friend shared with him a box of photographs that had been taken by a homeless man, Bob "Soupy" Campbell. Some of those extraordinary photos are sprinkled throughout the book.

The audio book is capably performed by Susan Denaker. She has good pacing and really brought Laurel to life for me. I could understand her hurt and confusion and frustration.

Jessica says

I really wanted to like this book, as I found the premise fascinating. The execution, though, was so weak that it was almost unbearable to force my way through the entire book.

The story centers on Laurel, who survived a brutal attack as a young college student. She graduates from college, dates older men, and works at a homeless shelter, where she comes across a man named Bobbie, who carries with him a mysterious box of photographs. Laurel becomes obsessed with the photographs and with figuring out where Bobbie came from and how he ended up in her homeless shelter.

Bohjalian's exposition is dreadful. It frustrated me that he gave Laurel a mystery to solve, but gave the reader the answer on the very first page of the first chapter. It's more enticing if the reader is trying to solve the mystery alongside the characters, more clever to dangle the hints in front of us to see if we catch on to them.

The character development was just as weak as the exposition. The book jacket told me that Laurel was so traumatized by her almost-rape that she withdrew from society and began working at the homeless shelter as a means of dealing with it. However, this wasn't a part of the story at all, outside of the prologue, where it was briefly touched on in the form of a few sentences. As the story goes on, Laurel barely seems to be affected by the attack at all, except when Bohjalian explicitly states that she doesn't like having sex in the missionary position because it makes her think of her attackers and that she doesn't like to be in the state of Vermont on the anniversary of the attack.

None of the secondary characters had any depth whatsoever. Laurel's roommate, smitten neighbor, much older boyfriend, and shelter coworkers were all flat and acted without motivation or reason.

The biggest weakness in this book, though, is the supposed twist ending that much of the events, (view spoiler)

This book was such a terrible letdown, poorly structured and written with ho-hum prose. The entire time I was reading it, all I could think about was how it *should* have been written instead.

Carol says

I am absolutely stunned!! This book was amazing. I was immediately drawn in and intrigued from the start of it. I have worked in psychiatry as a registered nurse as well as enjoy reading books about mental health, so this book was right up my alley. I have read *The Great Gatsby*, and I think because I have read that, I was able to get so much more out of reading this one.

Jaime says

The first thing I did before I started this book was head to Wikipedia and read a summary of *The Great Gatsby*, since it's been 12+ years since I read it, and it's really an integral part of this book. I recommend that to anyone who picks this up.

I often start thinking about what I'm going to say about a book before I finish it. As I neared the end of this, my thoughts were "this wasn't as good as *Midwives* or *Water Witches*". Then, Bohjalian gives you a very M.

Night Shyamalan-esque twist that completely redeems the story and made me go back and reread parts, to see if I should have seen it coming. Laurel's behavior throughout the book is very strange, but by the end, it all makes sense.

All in all, this is a slow starter, but it's worth it in the end.

Debbie Petersen says

I figured out the supposed "twist" as soon as I read the psychiatrist's notes. The effort taken to write them as genderless came off as odd and clunky.

The whole thing came off to me as disjointed and in need of editing. There were some glaring mistakes--a child eating a caramel apple is described as having made a mess with it and it being red like blood all over her face and hands...um, caramel is BROWN. Everyone is described, even right in the middle of dialogue where we know all of their names, by their occupation: The waitress said blah blah blah. Blah blah blah, said the young social worker. And my favorite word of all (and apparently the author's as well) DOWAGER. Who has used that word in the last century? I was jolted out of the story each time.

An 11 year old child wonders what is really going on with Laurel (AKA The Social Worker) since she has noticed the "glimpses of darkness behind the veil," or some such nonsense. As the mother of an actual 11 year old, I can assure you that one would only notice a dark veil if the X Box is in use behind it. They could care less about the moody secrets of adults around them, except for how it affects them directly, such as if the adult is ordering pizza or is about to demand that chores or homework be finished. None of the characters in the book seem true to themselves, if that makes any sense. In the end I found I was indifferent to all of them.

The sad thing is, the premise was promising...a volunteer at a homeless shelter finds a box of photographs that belonged to a recently deceased resident. While looking through them, she comes upon a photograph of a young girl on a bike in a familiar landscape, and realizes it is a photograph of herself on the very day she was attacked and raped years before.

I could go on and on about the many ways this book grated on my nerves, but here are a few: Robert Buchanan sees a picture of a fictional housewife and decides to change his name to "Bobbie Crocker." Why the feminine spelling "Bobbie" instead of the masculine "Bobby?" Why was the homeless shelter repeatedly referred to as the acronym BEDS as if that was the actual name? I cringed every time I came across "BEDS." *cringing now*

Anyway, back to the name change. The newly minted Bobbie Crocker joins the army. The paragraph describing this is so poorly written that I will simply copy it here from page 295:

If the Army had any doubts about the mental health of a recruit whose moniker must have reminded them of a cake mix, they weren't sufficient to prevent them from allowing him to wade ashore at Omaha Beach in one of the very first waves behind the demolition teams. Bobbie would fight that year and into the next in France and Belgium and Germany, somehow escaping the war unscathed. Physically, anyway. He had an affair with a French woman who was in many ways even more scarred than he was, given how much of her family had died in the first German offensive in May 1940 and then fighting in North Africa in 1943. She lost two brothers, a cousin, and her father. He wanted to bring her back with him to the United States, but she wouldn't leave her family--the living and the dead.

The Army should have had doubts about his mental health because his last name was Crocker? Can you say

run on sentence? Who edited this?

Somehow I resisted throwing the book against the wall at this point. I should not have fought the urge. Limping along to the most unbelievable, contrived and trite ending, the reader finds that *SURPRISE!* Laurel is the one in the psychiatrist's chair, and that most of the characters were invented by her crazed mind! Imagine that. Of course, the fact that all of the made-up characters had scenes without Laurel involved, and their own thoughts, actions and opinions make that plot twist ludicrous...but what did you expect from a book that takes the characters of The Great Gatsby and pretends they are real people? Until the end, anyway. Laurel is crazy! That's why she thinks the Gatsbys were her neighbors! Get the big twist there? *gag*

Elyse says

I just noticed I didn't write a review on "The Double Bind"....

How did that happen? I must have either read it before I joined Goodreads --or was such a 'newbie-Goodreads' member --I just didn't write reviews yet.

I've told dozens of people to read this. I've bought this book as a gift several times ---its THAT GOOD!!! Completely unforgettable --

I 'could' write much more about this story --but some books are best knowing very little about --and just trusting you'll have an 'extraordinary' reading experience.

"Laurel Estabrook is attacked while riding her bicycle through the Vermont back roads"....
Her life is changed forever

Maybe my favorite psychological thriller books of all times!

Bonnie says

Although I am familiar with Chris Bohjalian, the title caught my eye. I was told (by an editor who recently read about 80 pages of my novel--in-progress), that the mother of my POV character was a classic case of the Double Bind personality. I had not heard of this before. (Google it to discover what it is -- or read this book!) In part, the editor was correct, but, of course, not having read the whole book, she couldn't make a definite assessment. It was helpful, though. As was this book -- in opening up a new area of "personality disorder", if you will, which I find fascinating.

I was blown away by this psychological mystery story. After the first 3 chapters, I put it down for a while. When I next picked it up, I couldn't put it back down again. I am not going to go into detail: I don't want to spoil anything!

I think this excellently crafted story would be great for anyone involved in a book club. (There is a Reading Group Discussion Guide at the end.) Or anyone who enjoys reading a story that has been expertly manipulated by its author -- and maybe, anyone that can afford to stay up all night reading...

Florence (Lefty) MacIntosh says

3 ½ stars Tough one to describe - you've got a rape victim, the mystery surrounding a homeless man and "The Great Gatsby" all mixed in...mental illness a big part of it and there's this weird blurring of reality and fiction, guess I'll tag it physiological suspense. A survival mechanism, we all do it, avoid confronting problems by throwing our energy into just about anything else - ah the tantalizing lure of distraction. Physically healed but with psychological wounds too painful to confront "*Sometimes a forgiving memory was the only way to get by*" she's obsessed with Bobbie's mysterious past, a gentle man who walked into the shelter announcing "*Honey, I'm home...less!*", and died leaving nothing behind but his brilliant photographs. I got her connection with him, two damaged, discarded people - Bobbie by society, Laurel by her rapists. Understood her determination to push others to respect him despite his mental illness as also an attempt at self-healing, a way of clawing back her own self worth.

Doesn't matter if you loved or hated "The Great Gatsby", trust me this doesn't romanticize the characters and its inclusion makes an odd sort of sense. "*The Great Gatsby is a book, in part, about broken people, their lies and distortions: the lies we live consciously.*"

Bottom-line it's readable & imaginative, liked its sensitive portrayal of the homeless. There is this feeling of unease about it though, worked for me but absolutely a matter of taste.

Cons: Sometimes bogged down by repetitiveness and I swear Bohjalian's deliberately confusing at times!

Warning: Graphic rape passages precariously straddle that exploitive line. Thought it important to the storyline so okay with it - you decide.

"Yeah, that was Bobbie Crocker. While some old codgers are playing golf in Fort Lauderdale, he was summering behind a Dumpster on Cherry Street and spending his winters in the state mental hospital."

Amy says

There were moments where I thought this book was really stupid. The main character was so dramatic at times, the plot seemed like it was trying to be more than it was only b/c the author was making the main character make such a big deal out of minimal things.

Turns out there was a reason for that. You don't find out until the very end (which you can predict near the end). The entire thing is explained on the last pages because it has to be completely written out, otherwise it's a book that is pretty useless. I don't like it when the author has to tell you in black and white why things in his story happened--I like reading the story and discovering why things are because it is a piece of the plot. The Double Bind isn't a worthless read but I wouldn't recommend you run out and get it.

Britany says

Laurel Estabrook, a social worker at a homeless shelter in Burlington, Vermont finds herself caught in the middle of case. Bobbie Crocker, a homeless man that came into her shelter, passes away, leaving behind a collection of pictures- pictures that have been in Life magazine and pictures of famous people, and places. Including the infamous home on West Egg that once belonged to Jay Gatsby! Yes, you read that right, this novel incorporates one version of an aftermath scenario of The Great Gatsby. Gatsby is my favorite classic novel, so it was refreshing to see this story-line unexpectedly tied in. Who really was Bobbie Crocker? And whose pictures are these he carried with him? Laurel becomes obsessed with figuring out this mystery.

The writing moved along and was enjoyable at times, I loved how the author mixed pictures from a real case and case notes from the psych ward, along with the moving story-lines with Laurel's bike incident and the Gatsby line. Overall, I think the author took on too much and the execution wasn't strong enough to make this great. Some of Laurel's behaviors broached unbelievable and it became hard for me to look past the discrepancies by the ending.

****Make sure you've read Gatsby before you read this one****

Kate says

I stayed interested throughout which says something. But it did get pretty repetitive at times. Maybe this is necessary for a book that's told from the perspective of a delusional person?

I am thankful that I watched The Great Gatsby recently otherwise I would've been lost on all the references and would've given up. And the photographs were very cool.

I am usually suspicious of male writers who try to write from women's perspectives. Especially because Bohjalian is a middle-aged author writing from the perspective of a young attractive 20-something woman who has a thing for middle-aged guys. Come on! That dynamic made any sexual references seem gross. And it made the brutal attack description seem really gross. Offensive even.

The minor characters were pretty shallow, except for Talia & David maybe. What was the point of Whit? I kept waiting for something big to come out of him but it never happened.

At times it read like the Christopher Pike books I read as a kid. I don't think that's a compliment. Ok just had to downgrade from 2 stars to 1.

The MOST annoying thing was the lengthy conversations where Laurel would interview people about Bobbie. (And why is it Bobbie with an "ie"? Isn't that the feminine spelling? The character seemed more like a Bobby than a Bobbie.) She would sit with perfect strangers and they would pour their hearts out about every tiny detail of his life which didn't seem plausible. I guess in the end we learn that this is because these conversations are all Laurel's delusion. But there's not enough clarity in the story while they are happening to justify their lengthy repetitive nature.

So I am left wondering: Why is this book all over the front door displays at Barnes & Noble? Probably b/c they are trying to get rid of it.

Tracy says

I would highly recommend this book to all book clubbers out there, because after you read it, you just want to talk to someone else who's read it. Kind of like after seeing the movie the Sixth Sense. There is a prerequisite that comes with this novel and that is to read or re-read *The Great Gatsby*. This is a must in order to understand all the references and parallels with Fitzgerald's novel. Bohjalian brings the characters from *The Great Gatsby* to life.

From reading the other reviews of *The Double Bind*, I see that people either love it or hate it. Yes, sometimes the language and word choice can be a bit bizarre, but I don't think that takes away from the story at all. I really think the story works and even if you have an inkling about the "big shocker" ending, Ummmm... SO WHAT? That's what's part of the suspense of reading a novel like this, to find if what we suspect is true. That's why I couldn't put it down at least. Besides, I don't think that anyone could say truthfully that they had every part of this novel figured out before the end.

I can't say too much else without giving anything away, but there are many many discussions about many many topics that could be spawned from this book, apparently even the writing itself is up for debate, but I love a book I can't put down and this one kept me up at night.

Maggi says

This is the sixth book of Chris Bohjalian I have read, and I found the others to be quite good. Perhaps his prose wasn't as gorgeous as some writers, but his stories were gripping, and I turned the pages quickly, (which, if you think about it, is the main reason we want to read a book!). *Tran-sister Radio* was fascinating and sensitive. I read *The Law of Similars* in a weekend. *Before You Know Kindness* was complex and compelling. But despite the pull of the mysteriously wonderful photos that seem to have inspired the book, *The Double Bind* is a real disappointment. Before I figured out the odd conceit of the book, (the main character has grown up living up in a community where the characters from *The Great Gatsby* lived as real people) I was still annoyed by the obvious nature of the mechanics and the awkwardness of the structure. The plot line itself is unappealing, and the "trick" the author plays on the reader makes the time spent reading the book and understanding the characters feel like a waste of time.

B the BookAddict says

Bohjalian has written a dizzying portrayal of a young social worker, Laurel, searching for the truth behind the life of one of the homeless men she meets at the shelter where she works in Burlington. After his death, she finds his beloved cache of photographs that leads her to suspect that Bobbie Crocker was, in fact, Bobbie Buchanan, son of Tom and Daisy Buchanan. Reaching out to the one remaining Buchanan, Pamela - Bobbie's sister, she finds herself, and the shelter she works for, embroiled in a legal tussle over ownership of the photos. Why does Pamela so keenly want Bobbie's photographs if she is, as she insists, no relation to Bobbie Crocker?

But as Laurel follows the trail Bobbie appears to have left, she finds clues which seem to involve her own story; (view spoiler). She lurches from revelation to revelation, shunning contact with her friends, her boss and her boyfriend in the process.

Weaving into, and expanding the lives of well known fictional characters into his story, Bohjalian also teases the reader with real photographs taken by a real life once-homeless man from Vermont, Bob “Soupy” Campbell. I love anything ‘Gatsby’ but at the same time, am not so precious about it that I’m against another author giving lives to the book’s characters, long after Fitzgerald ended the story. Fiction begins to blur with fiction.... Did Bohjalian achieve his goal when I felt sorely tempted to start Googling the characters of this novel? 4★

Jo Ann says

REVIEW:

Throughout his career, Chris Bohjalian has earned a reputation for writing novels that examine some of the most important issues of our time. With *Midwives*, he explored the literal and metaphoric place of birth in our culture. In *The Buffalo Soldier*, he introduced us to one of contemporary literature’s most beloved foster children. And in *Before You Know Kindness*, he plumbed animal rights, gun control, and what it means to be a parent.

Chris Bohjalian’s riveting fiction keeps us awake deep into the night. As *The New York Times* has said, “Few writers can manipulate a plot with Bohjalian’s grace and power.” Now he is back with an ambitious new novel that travels between Jay Gatsby’s Long Island and rural New England, between the Roaring Twenties and the twenty-first century.

When college sophomore Laurel Estabrook is attacked while riding her bicycle through Vermont’s back roads, her life is forever changed. Formerly outgoing, Laurel withdraws into her photography and begins to work at a homeless shelter. There she meets Bobbie Crocker, a man with a history of mental illness and a box of photographs that he won’t let anyone see. When Bobbie dies suddenly, Laurel discovers that he was telling the truth: before he was homeless, Bobbie Crocker was a successful photographer who had indeed worked with such legends as Chuck Berry, Robert Frost, and Eartha Kitt.

As Laurel’s fascination with Bobbie’s former life begins to merge into obsession, she becomes convinced that some of his photographs reveal a deeply hidden, dark family secret. Her search for the truth will lead her further from her old life—and into a cat-and-mouse game with pursuers who claim they want to save her.

In this spellbinding literary thriller, rich with complex and compelling characters—including Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan—Chris Bohjalian takes readers on his most intriguing, most haunting, and most unforgettable journey yet.
