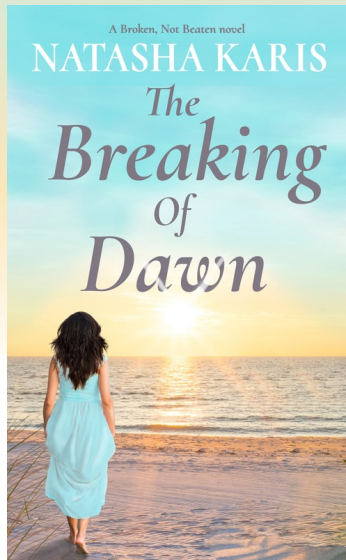




BOOK CLUB KIT

The Breaking Of Dawn

NATASHA KARIS

A Broken, Not Beaten novel

Discussion Guide · 21 Questions

A note before you begin. These questions assume everyone has finished the book. They discuss the ending.

Dawn Moloney has spent thirty years saying yes to everyone but herself. What follows are questions about silence and the cost of it, about pain other people can't see, and about what happens when somebody finally asks a woman what she actually wants. Take the ones that spark something and leave the rest.

FINDING A VOICE

- 1 The novel opens with Dawn on the ground, thinking: *"In two seconds, I could get up, kick out, scream or run. I could fight back. Instead, I do nothing."* By the end of the book, do you read that moment differently than you did on page one?
- 2 Dawn tells us she likes to keep the peace, and that whatever has annoyed Kristin is "her fault anyway." Where do you think that instinct came from? Did you find it frustrating, familiar, or both?
- 3 After Mr Greene passes her over for the promotion, Dawn silently rehearses everything she should have said — the employee-of-the-month months, the shifts nobody else would cover. Have you ever had a version of that conversation in your head instead of out loud? What stops us?
- 4 Alayne teaches Dawn the "I am" game. Dawn's first journal entry ends *"I am useless. I am broken."* Her last words in the book are *"I am Dawn."* What has to happen in between for that sentence to become possible?

IAN, AND THE SHAPE OF THE PATTERN

- 5 Ian appears mostly in flashback: an arm twisted red, the constant calls, the put-downs in front of people who kept liking him anyway. Dawn describes her own family and neighbours as "unknowing conspirators to my staying." How much responsibility do you think a community bears for what it doesn't want to see?
- 6 Twelve years later, Mrs Donnelly still tells Dawn how well Ian has done. Why do you think Dawn accepts the dig rather than correcting the record? Would you have?
- 7 The novel suggests that *"the person being controlled never sees what is going on from the outside of the situation."* Do you agree? Did any character see it at the time?

CIARAN, KRISTIN, JED AND SAM

- 8 Dawn spends years waiting for Ciaran to speak first, and Ciaran spends the same years waiting for Dawn. Whose silence do you hold more responsible? Does the book take a side?
- 9 When Dawn finally says it out loud — *"You knew I was in love with you... you never told me"* — Ciaran answers, *"You've always scared me."* Did that land as an explanation or an excuse?
- 10 Dawn's relationship with Jed is built on wanting more than he can give, and she knows it. What is she getting from that arrangement? Does anything about it change by the end?

- 11 Alayne warns Dawn about Sam, then refuses to tell her what she needs. Was that the right call from someone in Alayne's position?
- 12 Kristin is never given a scene from her own point of view. Reading between the lines, what do you think was going on with her? Does the novel treat her fairly?

PAIN, AND THE BODY

- 13 Dawn is told her spine is degenerating at thirty. For a long stretch of the novel her world shrinks to the size of a bedroom. How did the book's handling of long-term pain compare with other novels you've read — or with anything you've watched someone go through?
- 14 Alayne tells Dawn that *"strength doesn't have to mean pushing yourself. Strength can also mean listening to your body and accepting the bad day."* This sits alongside her other line, *"by not giving in, you will conquer the pain."* Are those two ideas in tension? Can both be true?
- 15 Dawn's first thought about the chiropractor is *"I am not going to a quack."* What finally moves her, and what does the novel seem to be saying about who gets believed when they say they're in pain?
- 16 Cooking is Dawn's refuge long before anything else works — she calls it her food lullaby, and she plans recipes in her head to get herself to sleep. Why food, do you think? What's yours?

PLACE AND LANGUAGE

- 17 The author opens the book with a note explaining that the characters speak Hiberno-English, and that anything that reads strangely is intentional. Did the Cork voice draw you in or slow you down? Would the novel work relocated somewhere else?
- 18 Knockfarraig and Crookstown sit a bridge apart, and Dawn's feelings about the two places could not be more different. What does the bridge come to mean over the course of the book?

THE ENDING

- 19 The title works in at least two directions — the breaking of *Dawn*, and the breaking of *dawn*. Which reading did you arrive at first? Did that change?
- 20 On the cliff, Dawn lists everything that could go wrong with Ciaran and jumps anyway. The novel ends before we learn what happens between them. Were you satisfied by that, or did you want to know?

- 21 Dawn tells her mother, “Sorry, *that Dawn is gone for good. You’ll have to make do with this one.*” Is the old Dawn really gone? Is any of her worth keeping?

IF YOUR GROUP WANTS TO GO FURTHER

- The author's note explains that parts of the book are drawn from her own back injury and the years it took to recover. Does knowing that change how you read the pain in the novel?
- *Broken, Not Beaten* is a series about broken people finding hope again, and Alayne Adams has books of her own. Having met her here, whose story would you want next?
- If you had to write your own first journal entry the way Alayne asked Dawn to — honest, unflattering, no editing — could you? What would be hardest to put on the page?

HOSTING NOTES

Something to eat. Dawn cooks her way through the worst of it. Several of the dishes in the novel — including the cupcakes — are collected in a free recipe book from the author, which makes an easy theme for the evening's food.

www.subscribepage.com/thebreakingofdawn

Say hello. Natasha Karis is always glad to hear from book clubs reading *The Breaking Of Dawn*.

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For hosts. The novel contains a physical assault and its aftermath, and passages dealing with chronic pain, depression and suicidal thoughts. It may be worth a quiet word to anyone joining who would want to know in advance.

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