Discussion Questions for BROKEN by Karin Slaughter

1) Allison’s mother tells her ‘Whatever pleasure men can give you ain’t never worth the pain.’ Which of the females in this story would agree with this statement and why? Do you think this idea speaks to a larger theme throughout the book?

2) It seems to rain throughout this entire book, with most of the characters (Will in particular) being almost permanently soaked in a cold driving rain. How is this incessant rain used as a literary device?

3) Will has had a lifelong struggle with dyslexia and was often made to feel stupid because of this disability. How does Will’s dyslexia predispose his feelings toward the victims in this investigation?

4) In Karin Slaughter’s other Atlanta GBI books, Will and Faith work as partners, playing to each other’s strengths. How does Faith’s absence affect Will’s investigation? What strengths and/or weaknesses do Sara and Lena bring to the case? How do Sara, Lena and Will’s individual processes each affect the investigation?

5) Will’s introduction to Lena comes via a very biased description from Sara. How does Sara’s vendetta against Lena cloud her judgment and initial assessment of the crime? To what extent does Sara’s description of the crime influence Will and his investigation?

6) Will says “I don’t think Lena’s completely devoid of a soul. I think she’s angry, and self-destructive and feeling trapped.” Do you think this is an accurate description of Lena? Did you feel the same way even at the conclusion of the book?

7) When Lena finally confronts Frank regarding the events at Tommy’s house, Frank then turns on her and accuses her of wrongdoing. How does Lena’s accusation change the way you feel about Frank? Does it change the way you feel about Lena? When Frank later meets with Sara and treats her in a very protective, fatherly manner, it is in stark contrast to the above interaction with Lena. Does this further impact your impression of Frank? Did your impression again change at the conclusion of the book?

8) Tessa says that Will ‘eats like the kids at the orphanage’ because he ‘wraps his arm around his plate so no one can steal his food.’ What other behavior does Will exhibit that reveals his state care past? What do you think Will’s reluctance to admit his dyslexia and/or need for glasses says about his personality and history?
9) Will says ‘Cops don’t like to be questioned. They circle their wagons, even if they know it’s wrong.’ What are other stereotypes of the police? To what extent do you think this statement proves true or false in this book?

10) Jason believes that Allison wants for nicer things, which is why he initially became involved in this dangerous situation. To what extent do you think this is true, based on Allison’s early introduction? Does your impression of Allison change after Will examines her room?

11) Lionel suggests that Will ‘get a heat gun and work it just the tiniest bit…to get that kink out. Too much heat, and you’ll burn a hole right through. Not too much heat, son.’ Do you think Lionel knows more than he’s letting on? Is Lionel suggesting anything beyond a simple repair?

12) Will says that he finds silence is often the best way to get answers because people fill in uncomfortable silences with information they would have otherwise withheld. When does Will use this tactic to his advantage? Is anyone in this book immune to this tactic?

13) Sara and Faith are the only ones who know about Will’s dyslexia. How does Sara’s acknowledgement of his disability change their interaction? Do you think it affects Sara’s feelings about Will?

14) Why does Will set himself up in Jeffrey’s old office? How does this establish the dynamic with the other officers? How does this impact the way Lena initially treats him?

15) In Sara’s struggle with Darla, the river carries away Jeffrey’s ring. Sara silently says to Jeffrey, ‘Thank you for letting me go’. What do you think this means for Sara’s growth and ability to move on? How has water played a role otherwise in this book?

16) Jared holds Jeffrey ultimately responsible for his own death. What do you think of this alternative perspective? Does this affect how you feel about any of the other characters?

17) Sara describes the procedure for drug testing as an inherently flawed system, driven largely by money and greed. What do you think of the way in which it works and how could it be improved?