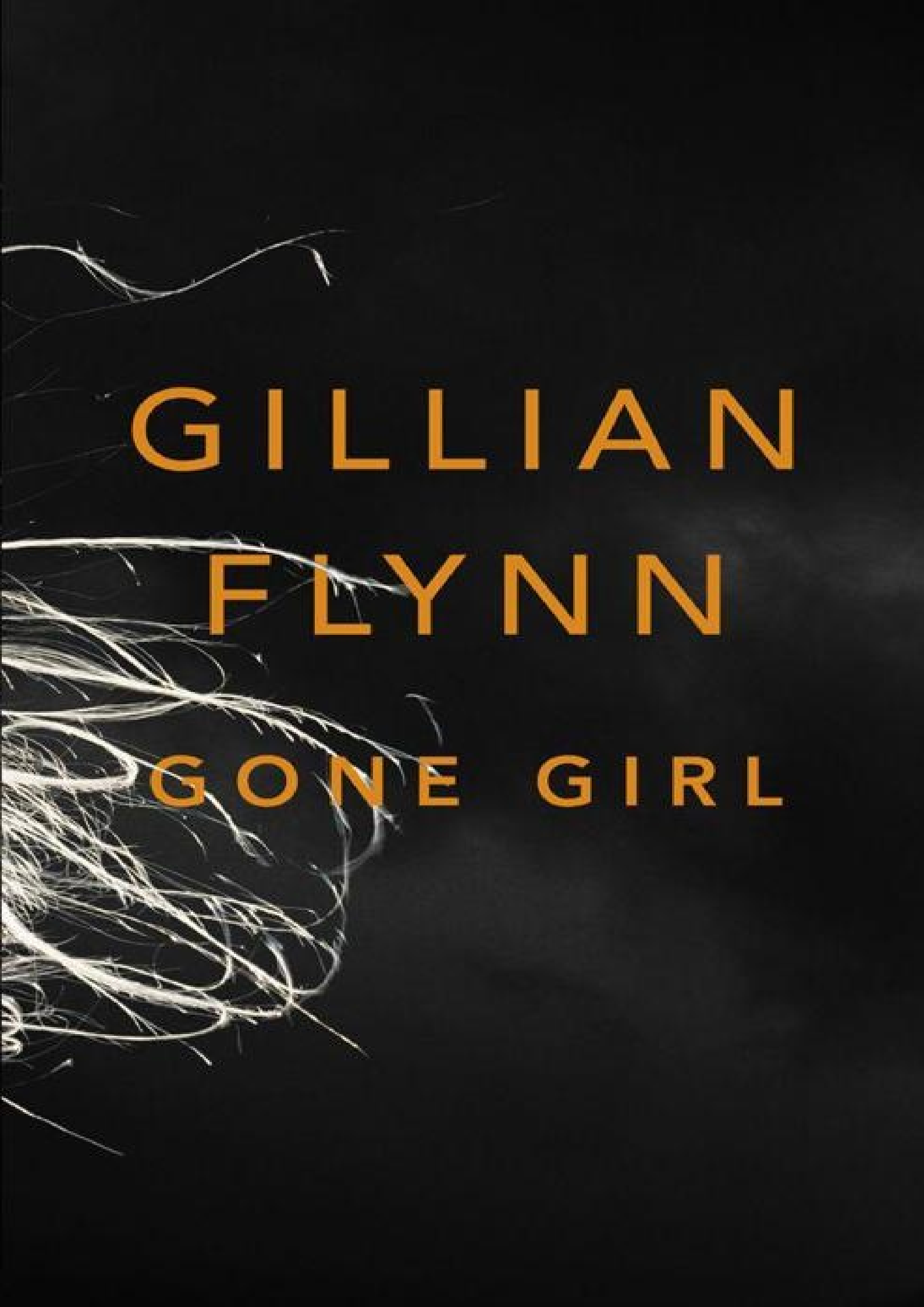




GILLIAN

FLYNN

GONE GIRL

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*To Brett: light of my life, senior and
Flynn: light of my life, junior*

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Love is the world's infinite mutability; lies, hatred, murder even, are all knit up in it; it is the inevitable blossoming of its opposites, a magnificent rose smelling faintly of blood.

Tony Kushner, THE ILLUSION

PART ONE
BOY LOSES GIRL

NICK DUNNE

THE DAY OF

When I think of my wife, I always think of her head. The shape of it, to begin with. The very first time I saw her, it was the back of the head I saw, and there was something lovely about it, the angles of it. Like a shiny, hard corn kernel or a riverbed fossil. She had what the Victorians would call *a finely shaped head*. You could imagine the skull quite easily.

I'd know her head anywhere.

And what's inside it. I think of that, too: her mind. Her brain, all those coils, and her thoughts shuttling through those coils like fast, frantic centipedes. Like a child, I picture opening her skull, unspooling her brain and sifting through it, trying to catch and pin down her thoughts. *What are you thinking, Amy?* The question I've asked most often during our marriage, if not out loud, if not to the person who could answer. I suppose these questions stormcloud over every marriage: *What are you thinking? How are you feeling? Who are you? What have we done to each other? What will we do?*

My eyes flipped open at exactly six a.m. This was no avian fluttering of the lashes, no gentle blink toward consciousness. The awakening was mechanical. A spooky ventriloquist-dummy click of the lids: The world is black and then, *showtime!* 6-0-0 the clock said – in my face, first thing I saw. 6-0-0. It felt different. I rarely woke at such a rounded time. I was a man of jagged risings: 8:43, 11:51, 9:26. My life was alarmless.

At that exact moment, 6-0-0, the sun climbed over the skyline of oaks, revealing its full summer angry-God self. Its reflection flared across the river toward our house, a long, blaring finger aimed at me through our frail bedroom curtains. Accusing: *You have been seen. You will be seen.*

I wallowed in bed, which was our New York bed in our new house, which we still called *the new house*, even though we'd been back here for two years. It's a rented house right along the Mississippi River, a house that screams Suburban Nouveau Riche, the kind of place I aspired to as a kid from my split-level, shag-carpet side of town. The kind of house that is immediately familiar: a generically grand, unchallenging, new, new, new house that my wife would – and did – detest.