

**Title:** Dark Places  
**Author:** Gillian Flynn  
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**Part of Series:** No

“The truly frightening flaw in humanity is our capacity for cruelty – we all have it” In Gillian Flynn’s novel, *Dark Places*, it showcases the dark occurrences that are hidden in plain sight, even in a small Midwestern town. Follow the story of the Day family and the tragedy that befell them, otherwise known as “The Satan Sacrifice” of Kinnakee. Seven-year-old, Libby Day, is the sole survivor of the massacre that killed her mother and two sisters, as well as the one who testified that her teenage brother, Ben, was the one who did it. Fast-forward twenty-five years and Libby has been tracked down by the Kill Club, a group obsessed with famous crimes, with the hopes of helping set her brother free from a crime the world is convinced he did not commit. Haunted by thoughts of the past, Libby goes on a journey to find all the key players from that night and once and for all find out who killed her family, for a price. Funded by the Kill Club, Libby’s journey takes her from small-town Missouri to forgotten Oklahoma tourist towns and back, all to find the truth about what really happened that night.

The novel takes you from the present, told to you from the perspective of present-day Libby, and to the past, of the days leading up to the murders told from both Ben and their mothers’ perspective. Gillian Flynn takes you to places that will send a shiver down your spine in anticipation of what is to come. *Dark Places* gives a look in on the things that are often swept under the rug when talking about the Midwest, like a neighborhood that had “thrived back in the stockyard era and then spent many decades the-opposite-of-thriving” (24) or the plainness of it all like how the “stretch of I-70 between Kansas City and St. Louis was hour and hours of pure ugly driving” (131). The concept of “ruin porn” can be seen throughout the novel from the decade vacant buildings to the dilapidated houses and the overall sense of abandonment. Flynn manages to show the intense poverty caused by the 1980’s farm crisis not only in the Day family, but by the scenery that surrounds each town. Coupled on top of the fact that the satanic cult hysteria that was sweeping through the nation during this time, Flynn captures the idea of fake nice and shows that behind closed doors you never know what a person is capable of.

Flynn weaves a tale not often told in the Midwest, one of the hardships and horror that can rest around any corner, all the while managing to keep readers on the edge of their seat. However, each of the towns described all seem to hold an air of neglect in them, like a place too far past its prime. Instead of showing any of the good that can come in the Midwest, Flynn focused on the dark and dirty parts of it all. At times I found the writing style of switching time from present and past a little disorientating, but after some getting used to, it made it difficult to set the book down. It was like going on a journey of your own, slowly piecing the puzzle together before finally reaching the conclusion. It was a thrilling tale of extreme poverty and satanic craze that shed new light on the stereotypical peaceful Midwest.

Reviewed by Becca Clanton