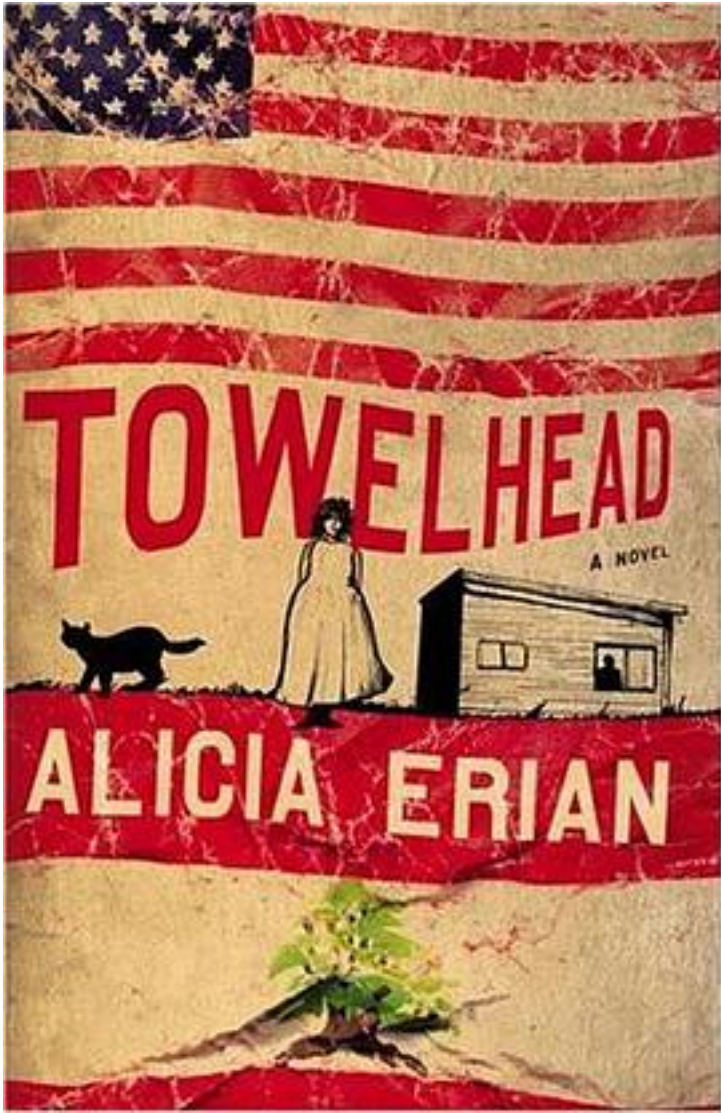


Towelhead



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The year is 1991. When Jasira's mother finds out what has been going on between her boyfriend and her thirteen-year-old daughter, she has to make a choice -- and chooses to send Jasira off to Houston Texas, to live with her father. A remote disciplinarian prone to explosive rages, Jasira's father is unable to show his daughter the love she craves -- and far less able to handle her feelings about her changing body. Bewildered by extremes of parental scrutiny and neglect, Jasira begins to look elsewhere for affection. Saddam Hussein has invaded Kuwait, and high school has become a lonely place for a "towelhead." When her father meets, and forbids her to see, her boyfriend, it becomes lonelier still. But there is always Mr. Vuoso -- a neighboring army reservist whose son Jasira babysits. Mr. Vuoso, as Jasira discovers, has an extensive collection of Playboy magazines. And he doesn't seem to think there's anything wrong with Jasira's body at all. Painfully funny, tender, and sexually charged, Towelhead is that rare thing: a gloriously readable novel unafraid to take risks. The story of a girl failed by her parents and by a conflicted America, Towelhead is an ultimately redemptive and moving work that none of us can afford to ignore.

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