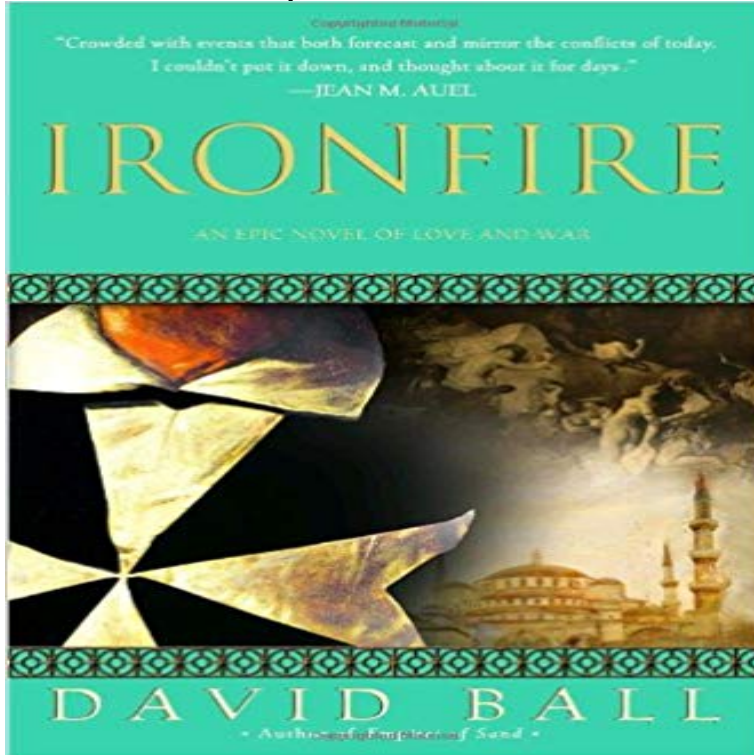


# Ironfire: An Epic Novel of Love and War



From the acclaimed author of *Empires of Sand* comes a mesmerizing new adventure that Jean Auel cites as crowded with events that both forecast and mirror the conflicts of today. Sweeping from the drawing rooms of Paris to the palace of Suleiman the Magnificent to the dark hold of a slave ship racing across the sea, here is a dazzling story of love and valor, innocence and identity, an epic novel of the clash of civilizations on a barren island where the future was forged. The Mediterranean, the sixteenth century: Lying squarely in the midst of the vital sea lanes between the Christian West and the Ottoman Empire in the East, and ruled by the ancient Order of the Knights of St. John, Malta will become the stage upon which the fate of the world turns. For one of its sons, the hand of violence strikes swiftly, when young Nicolo Borg is seized by Barbary slavers and launched on a remarkable journey to the court of the supreme ruler of the Muslim world. Renamed Asha, plotting his escape even as he swears allegiance to the god of his masters and is schooled in the arts of culture and war, the innocent boy will be transformed into one of the Sultans deadliest commanders. For Nicos beloved sister, Maria, his loss fires her hatred for the knights who did nothing to save him and her dreams of escape from her stifling home. As the headstrong girl grows into a fierce beauty, she will capture the attention of one man in particular, Christien de Vries, a surgeon-knight torn between duty and desire, caught up in Malta's frantic preparations against the coming Ottoman storm. Around Nico and Maria are men and women who will share their destinies: Dragut Rais, a brilliant corsair, arch-rival of the knights; Giulio Salvago, a priest in full flight from his carnal nature; Alisa, a young beauty hidden away in a harem; Jean de La Valette, the master knight who is Malta's only hope for survival. As the mighty Ottoman fleet bears down on the

tiny island, as Nico Borg makes his way back to his homeland at the helm of a warship, Ironfire moves inexorably to a shattering climax where all will face ultimate justice in the murderous cauldron of siege warfare. Brilliantly capturing the crosscurrents of a storied age, Ironfire is historical fiction in the grand tradition, a stirring realization of a pivotal moment in time that irrevocably shaped the world we inhabit today. From the Hardcover edition.

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