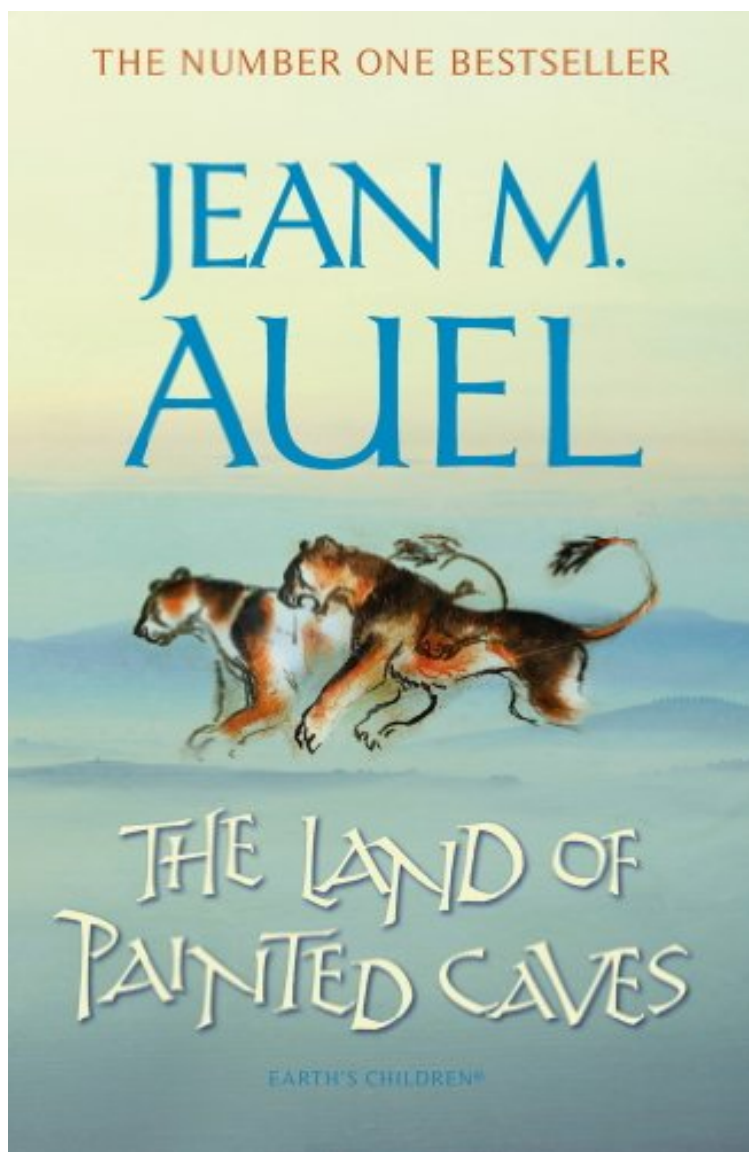


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# The Land of Painted Caves



*Par Jean M. Auel*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurTHE LAND OF PAINTED CAVES concludes the story of Ayla, her mate Jondalar, and their little daughter, Jonayla, taking readers on a journey of discovery and adventure as Ayla struggles to find a balance between her duties as a new mother and her training to become a Zelandoni one of the Ninth Cave community's spiritual leaders and healers.Once again, Jean Auel combines her brilliant narrative skills and appealing characters with a remarkable re-creation of the way life was lived thousands of years ago, rendering the terrain, dwelling places, longings, beliefs, creativity and daily lives of Ice Age Europeans as real to the reader as today's news.Extrait lThe band of travelers walked along the path between the clear sparkling water of Grass River and the black-streaked white limestone cliff, following the trail that

paralleled the right bank. They went single file around the bend where the stone wall jutted out closer to the waters edge. Ahead a smaller path split off at an angle toward the crossing place, where the flowing water spread out and became shallower, bubbling around exposed rocks. Before they reached the fork in the trail a young woman near the front suddenly stopped, her eyes opening wide as she stood perfectly still, staring ahead. She pointed with her chin, not wanting to move. Look! Over there! she said in a hissing whisper of fear. Lions! Joharran, the leader, lifted his arm, signaling the band to a halt. Just beyond the place where the trail diverged, they now saw pale-tawny cave lions moving around in the grass. The grass was such effective camouflage, however, that they might not have noticed them until they were much closer, if it hadnt been for the sharp eyes of Thefona. The young woman from the Third Cave had exceptionally good vision, and though she was quite young, she was noted for her ability to see far and well. Her innate talent had been recognized early and they had begun training her when she was a small girl; she was their best lookout. Near the back of the group, walking in front of three horses, Ayla and Jondalar looked up to see what was causing the delay. I wonder why weve stopped, Jondalar said, a familiar frown of worry wrinkling his forehead. Ayla observed the leader and the people around him closely, and instinctively moved her hand to shield the warm bundle that she carried in the soft leather blanket tied to her chest. Jonayla had recently nursed and was sleeping, but moved slightly at her mothers touch. Ayla had an uncanny ability to interpret meaning from body language, learned young when she lived with the Clan. She knew Joharran was alarmed and Thefona was frightened. Ayla, too, had extraordinarily sharp vision. She could also pick up sounds above the range of normal hearing and feel the deep tones of those that were below. Her sense of smell and taste were also keen, but she had never compared herself with anyone, and didnt realize how extraordinary her perceptions were. She was born with heightened acuity in all her senses, which no doubt contributed to her survival after losing her parents and everything she knew at five years. Her only training had come from herself. She had developed her natural abilities during the years she studied animals, chiefly carnivores, when she was teaching herself to hunt. In the stillness, she discerned the faint but familiar rumblings of lions, detected their distinctive scent on a slight breeze, and noticed that several people in front of the group were gazing ahead. When she looked, she saw something move. Suddenly the cats hidden by the grass seemed to jump into clear focus. She could make out two young and three or four adult cave lions. As she started moving forward, she reached with one hand for her spear-thrower, fastened to a carrying loop on her belt, and with the other for a spear from the holder hanging on her back. Where are you going? Jondalar asked. She stopped. There are lions up ahead just beyond the split in the trail, she said under her breath. Jondalar turned to look, and noticed movement that he interpreted as lions now that he knew what to look for. He reached for his weapons as well. You should stay here with Jonayla. Ill go. Ayla glanced down at her sleeping baby, then looked up at him. Youre good with the spear-thrower, Jondalar, but there are at least two cubs and three grown lions, probably more. If the lions think the cubs are in danger and decide to attack, youll need help, someone to back you up, and you know Im better than anyone, except you. His brow furrowed again as he paused to think, looking at her. Then he nodded. All right . . . but stay behind me. He detected movement out of the corner of his eye and glanced back. What about the horses? They know lions are near. Look at them, Ayla said. Jondalar looked. All three horses, including the new young filly, were staring ahead, obviously aware of the huge felines. Jondalar frowned again. Will they be all right? Especially little Gray? They know to stay out of the way of those lions, but I dont see Wolf, Ayla said. Id better whistle for him. You dont have to, Jondalar said, pointing in a different direction. He must sense something, too. Look at him coming. Ayla turned and saw a wolf racing toward her. The canine was a magnificent animal, larger than most, but an injury from a fight with other wolves that left him with a bent ear gave him a rakish look. She made the special signal that she used when they hunted together. He knew it meant to stay near and pay close attention to her. They ducked around people as they hurried toward the front, trying not to cause any undo commotion, and to remain as inconspicuous as possible. Im glad youre here, Joharran said softly when he saw his brother and Ayla with the wolf quietly appear with their spear-throwers in hand. Do you know how many there are? Ayla asked. More than I thought, Thefona said, trying to seem calm and not let her fear show. When I first saw them, I thought there were maybe three or four, but they are moving around in the grass, and now I think there may be ten or more. Its a big pride. And they are feeling confident, Joharran said. How do you know that? Thefona asked. Theyre ignoring us. Jondalar knew his mate was very familiar with the huge felines. Ayla knows cave lions, he said. Perhaps we should ask her what she thinks. Joharran nodded in her direction, asking the question silently. Joharran is right. They know were here. And they know how many they are and how many we are, Ayla said, then added, They may see us as something like a herd of horses or

aurochs and think they may be able to single out a weak one. I think they are new to this region. What makes you think so? Joharran said. He was always surprised at Aylas wealth of knowledge of four-legged hunters, but for some reason it was also at times like this that he noticed her unusual accent more. They dont know us, thats why theyre so confident, Ayla continued. If they were a resident pride that lived around people and had been chased or hunted a few times, I dont think they would be so unconcerned. Well, maybe we should give them something to be concerned about, Jondalar said. Joharrans brow wrinkled in a way that was so much like his taller though younger brothers, it made Ayla want to smile, but it usually showed at a time when smiling would be inappropriate. Perhaps it would be wiser just to avoid them, the dark-haired leader said. I dont think so, Ayla said, bowing her head and looking down. It was still difficult for her to disagree with a man in public, especially a leader. Though she knew it was perfectly acceptable among the Zelandonia after all, some leaders were women, including, at one time, Joharran and Jondalars mothersuch behavior from a woman would not have been tolerated in the Clan, the ones who raised her. Why not? Joharran asked, his frown turning into a scowl. Those lions are resting too close to the home of the Third Cave, Ayla said quietly. There will always be lions around, but if they are comfortable here, they might think of it as a place to return when they want to rest, and would see any people who come near as prey, especially children or elders. They could be a danger to the people who live at Two Rivers Rock, and the other nearby Caves, including the Ninth. Joharran took a deep breath, then looked at his fair-haired brother. Your mate is right, and you as well, Jondalar. Perhaps now is the time to let those lions know they are not welcome to settle down so close to our homes. This would be a good time to use spear-throwers so we can hunt from a safer distance. Several hunters here have been practicing, Jondalar said. It was for just this sort of thing that he had wanted to come home and show everyone the weapon he had developed. We may not even have to kill one, just injure a couple to teach them to stay away. Jondalar, Ayla said, softly. Now she was getting ready to differ with him, or at least to make a point that he should consider. She looked down again, then raised her eyes and looked directly at him. She wasnt afraid to speak her mind to him, but she wanted to be respectful. Its true that a spear-thrower is a very good weapon. With it, a spear can be thrown from a much greater distance than one thrown by hand, and that makes it safer. But safer is not safe. A wounded animal is unpredictable. And one with the strength and speed of a cave lion, hurt and wild with pain, could do anything. If you decide to use these weapons against those lions, they should not be used to injure, but to kill. Shes right, Jondalar, Joharran said. Jondalar frowned at his brother, then grinned sheepishly. Yes she is, but, as dangerous as they are, I always hate to kill a cave lion if I dont have to. They are so beautiful, so lithe and graceful in the way they move. Cave lions dont have much to be afraid of. Their strength gives them confidence. He glanced at Ayla with a glint of pride and love. I always thought Aylas Cave Lion totem was right for her. Discomfited by showing his strong inner feelings for her, a hint of a flush colored his cheeks. But I do think this is a time when spear-throwers could be very useful. Joharran noticed that most of the travelers had crowded closer. How many are with us that can use one? he asked his brother. Well, theres you, and me, and Ayla, of course, Jondalar said, looking at the group. Rushemar has been practicing a lot and is getting pretty good. Solabans been busy making some ivory handles for tools for some of us and hasnt been working at it as much, but hes got the basics. Ive tried a spear-thrower a few times, Joharran. I dont have one of my own, and Im not very good at it, Thefona said, but I can throw a spear without one. Thank you, Thefona, for reminding me, Joharran said. Nearly everyone can handle a spear without a spear-thrower, including women. We shouldnt forget that. Then he directed his comments to the group at large. We need to let those lions know that this is not a good place for them. Whoever wants to go after them, using a spear by hand or with the thrower, come over here. Ayla started to loosen her babys carrying blanket. Folara, would you watch Jonayla for me? she said, approaching Jondalars younger sister, unless youd rather stay and hunt cave lions. Ive gone out on drives, but I never was very good with a spear, and I dont seem to be much better with the thrower, Folara said. Ill take Jonayla. The infant was now thoroughly awake, and when the young woman held out her arms for the baby, she willingly went to her aunt. Ill help her, Proleva said to Ayla. Joharrans mate also had a baby girl in a carrying blanket, just a few days older than Jonayla, and an active boy who could count six years to watch out for as well. I think we should take all the children away from here, perhaps back behind the jutting rock, or up to the Third Cave. Thats a very good idea, Joharran said. Hunters stay here. The rest of you go back, but go slowly. No sudden moves. We want those cave lions to think we are just milling around, like a herd of aurochs. And when we pair off, each group keep together. They will probably go after anyone alone. Ayla turned back toward the four-legged hunters and saw many lion faces looking in their direction, very alert. She watched the animals move around, and began to see some distinguishing characteristics,

helping her to count them. She watched a big female casually turn around, a male, she realized when she saw his male parts from the backside. She'd forgotten for a moment that the males here didn't have manes. The male cave lions near her valley to the east, including one that she knew quite well, did have some hair around the head and neck, but it was sparse. This is a big pride, she thought, more than two handfuls of counting words, possibly as many as three, including the young ones. From the Paperback edition. Revue de presse Praise for SHELTERS OF STONE: 'Jean Auel's greatest achievement is to have created a plausible primeval community where men and women love and sometimes hate, and learn to survive in a harsh environment that demands rules and co-operation.' (Daily Express 20021208) 'Meticulously researched . . . fascinating . . . course-by-course menus for Upper Paleolithic blow-outs . . . that Joanne Harris might envy. Jean Auel is as remarkable a figure as J R R Tolkien.' (Independent Magazine 20021208) 'Jean M. Auel has meticulously researched her subject and this latest book should continue the huge success of the series.' (Hello) 'As always, Auel has meticulously researched her prehistoric subject and this latest offering is a triumphant continuation of the saga.' (Irish News (Belfast)) 'Massive in scope' (Daily Mirror) 'Impeccable research makes this much more than a fantasy reconstruction of prehistoric life.' (Daily Express) 'Bursting with hard information about ancient days and awash in steamy sex . . . Auel's latest will not only please her legions of fans but will hit the top of the list, pronto.' (Publishers Weekly) 'Enthralling, exciting and impossible to put down.' (York Evening Press) 'A rewarding read. A brilliant work of imagination' (Good Book Guide) --Daily Express