



Enclave (The Razorland Trilogy)

By Ann Aguirre

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New York City has been decimated by war and plague, and most of civilization has migrated to underground enclaves, where life expectancy is no more than the early 20's. When Deuce turns 15, she takes on her role as a Huntress, and is paired with Fade, a teenage Hunter who lived Topside as a young boy. When she and Fade discover that the neighboring enclave has been decimated by the tunnel monsters--or Freaks--who seem to be growing more organized, the elders refuse to listen to warnings. And when Deuce and Fade are exiled from the enclave, the girl born in darkness must survive in daylight--guided by Fade's long-ago memories--in the ruins of a city whose population has dwindled to a few dangerous gangs.

Ann Aguirre's thrilling young adult novel is the story of two young people in an apocalyptic world--facing dangers, and feelings, unlike any they've ever known.

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Editorial Review

Review

“[Enclave] is a young adult dystopian novel and has been compared to the hit series *The Hunger Games*. To say we're excited is a major understatement.” *?ElleGirl.com*

“In her first young adult novel, Aguirre (the Sirantha Jax series) has created a gritty and highly competent heroine, an equally deadly sidekick/love interest, and a fascinating if unpleasant civilization. This series is likely to hold considerable appeal for fans of *The Hunger Games*.” *?Publishers Weekly*

“*Enclave* is dark and thrilling, fast-paced and intense. With some graphic and gross imagery and a hard look at a post-apocalyptic world, Aguirre has taken themes from Scott Westerfeld and an assortment of zombie literature and created something that is very much her own--and a very engaging read.” *?RT Book Reviews*

“This well-paced zombie-esque adventure in an urban wasteland will keep fans happy.” *?Kirkus Reviews*

“Aguirre's young adult debut is a gripping survival story set in an apocalyptic future. . . . This is a tense, action-packed dystopia with intriguingly gray characters.” *?Booklist*

“Deuce's passion for life, even in her bleakest moments, is contagious, and that passion exemplifies the nebulous force that has driven all of these individuals to persist in the face of awful options.” *?The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

About the Author

Ann Aguirre is a USA Today bestselling author who lives in Mexico with her husband, children, two cats, and one very lazy dog. She writes SFF, romance, and YA. Visit her online at annaguirre.com.

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ENCLAVE (Deuce)

I was born during the second holocaust. People had told us legends of a time when human beings lived longer. I thought they were just stories. Nobody even lived to see forty in my world.

Today was my birthday. Each one added a layer of fear, and this year, it was worse. I lived in an enclave in which our oldest had seen twenty-five years. His face was withered, and his fingers shook when he attempted the smallest tasks. Some whispered it would be a kindness to kill him, but they meant they didn't want to see their futures written in his skin.

“Are you ready?” Twist stood waiting for me in the darkness.

He already wore his marks; he was two years older than me, and if he'd survived the ritual, I could. Twist was small and frail by any standards; privation had cut runnels into his cheeks, aging him. I studied the pallor of my forearms and then nodded. It was time for me to become a woman.

The tunnels were wide and laid with metal bars. We had found remnants of what might've been

transportation, but they lay on their sides like great, dead beasts. We used them for emergency shelters sometimes. If a hunting party was attacked before it reached sanctuary, a heavy metal wall between them and hungry enemies made the difference between life and death.

I had never been outside the enclave, of course. This space comprised the only world I'd ever known, cast in darkness and curling smoke. The walls were old, built of rectangular blocks. Once they had borne color but the years had worn them gray. Splashes of brightness came from items we scavenged from deeper in the warren.

I followed Twist through the maze, my gaze touching on familiar objects. My favorite item was a picture of a girl on a white cloud. I couldn't make out what she was holding; that part had worn away. But the words in bright red, HEAVENLY HAM, looked wonderful to me. I wasn't sure what that was, but by her expression, it must have been very good.

The enclave assembled on naming day, everyone who had survived to be named. We lost so many when they were young that we just called all the brats Boy or Girl, along with a number. Since our enclave was small—and dwindling—I recognized each face shadowed by the half-light. It was hard not to let the expectation of pain knot my stomach, along with the fear I would wind up with a terrible name that would cling to me until I died.

Please let it be something good.

The oldest, who carried the burden of the name Whitewall, walked to the center of the circle. He stopped before the fire, and its licking flame painted his skin in terrifying shades. With one hand, he beckoned me forward.

Once I joined him, he spoke. "Let each Hunter bring forth his gift."

The others carried their tokens and piled them at my feet. A mound of interesting items grew—and a few of them, I had no idea what purpose they might've served. *Decoration, perhaps?* People in the world before seemed obsessed with objects that existed simply to look pretty. I couldn't imagine such a thing.

After they finished, Whitewall turned to me. "It's time."

Silence fell. Cries echoed through the tunnels. Somewhere close by, somebody was suffering, but he wasn't old enough to attend my naming. We might lose another citizen before we finished here. Sickness and fever devastated us and our medicine man did more harm than good, it seemed to me. But I'd learned not to question his treatments. Here in the enclave, one didn't prosper by demonstrating too much independent thought.

These rules permit us to survive, Whitewall would say. *If you cannot abide by them, then you are free to see how you fare Topside.* The eldest had a mean streak; I didn't know if he had always been that way, or if age had made him so. And now, he stood before me, ready to take my blood.

Though I had never witnessed the ritual before, I knew what to expect. I extended my arms. The razor glinted in the firelight. It was our prized possession, and the oldest kept it clean and sharp. He made three jagged cuts on my left arm, and I held my pain until it coiled into a silent cry within me. I would not shame the enclave by weeping. He slashed my right arm before I could do more than brace. I clenched my teeth as hot blood trickled downward. Not too much. The cuts were shallow, symbolic.

"Close your eyes," he said.

I obeyed. He bent, spreading the gifts before me, and then grabbed my hand. His fingers were cold and thin. From whatever my blood struck, so would I take my name. With my eyes closed, I could hear the others breathing, but they were still and reverent. Movement rustled nearby.

“Open your eyes and greet the world, Huntress. From this day forward, you will be called Deuce.”

I saw the oldest held a card. It was torn and stained, yellow with age. The back had a pretty red pattern and the front had what looked like a black shovel blade on it, along with the number two. It was also speckled with my blood, which meant I must keep it with me at all times. I took it from him with a murmur of thanks.

Strange. No longer would I be known as Girl15. My new name would take some getting used to.

The enclave dispersed. People offered me nods of respect as they went about their business. Now that the naming day ceremony was complete, there was still food to be hunted and supplies to be scavenged. Our work never ended.

“You were very brave,” Twist said. “Now let’s take care of your arms.”

It was just as well we had no audience for this part because my courage failed. I wept when he put the hot metal to my skin. Six scars to prove I was tough enough to call myself Huntress. Other citizens received less; Builders got three scars. Breeders took only one. For as long as anyone could remember, the number of marks on the arms identified what role a citizen played.

We could not permit the cuts to heal naturally for two reasons: They would not scar properly and infection might set in. Over the years, we had lost too many to the naming day ritual because they cried and begged; they couldn’t bear the white-hot conclusion. Now Twist no longer paused at the sight of tears, and I was glad he didn’t acknowledge them.

I am Deuce.

Tears spilled down my cheeks as the nerve endings died, but the scars appeared one by one, proclaiming my strength and my ability to weather whatever I found out in the tunnels. I had been training for this day my whole life; I could wield a knife or a club with equal proficiency. Every bite of food I ate that had been supplied by someone else, I consumed with the understanding it would be my turn someday to provide for the brats.

That day had come. Girl15 was dead.

Long live Deuce.

* * *

After the naming, two friends held a party for me. I found them both waiting in the common area. We’d come up together as brats, though our personalities and physical skills put us on different paths. Still, Thimble and Stone were my two closest companions. Of the three, I was the youngest, and they’d taken pleasure in calling me Girl15 after they both got their names.

Thimble was a small girl a little older than me, who served as a Builder. She had dark hair and brown eyes. Because of her pointed chin and wide gaze, people sometimes questioned if she was old enough to be out of brat training. She hated that; there was no surer way to rouse her temper.

Grime often stained her fingers because she worked with her hands, and it found its way onto her clothing

and smudged her face. We'd gotten used to seeing her scratch her cheek and leave a dark streak behind. But I didn't tease her anymore because she was sensitive. One of her legs was a touch shorter than the other, and she walked with a whisper of a limp, not from injury, but that small defect. Otherwise, she might easily have become a Breeder.

Because he was strong and handsome, but not especially bright, Stone landed as a Breeder. Whitewall figured he had good material in him, and if matched with a clever female, he should sire good, solid offspring. Only citizens with traits worth passing on were allowed to contribute to the next generation, and the elders monitored births carefully. We couldn't allow more brats than we could provide for.

Thimble rushed up to examine my forearms. "How much did it hurt?"

"A lot," I said. "Twice as much as yours." I gave Stone a pointed look. "Six times as much as yours."

He always joked he had the easiest job in the enclave, and maybe that was true, but I wouldn't want the burden of making sure our people survived to the next generation. On top of siring the young, he also shared the responsibility of looking after them. I didn't think I could deal with so much death. Brats were unbelievably fragile. This year, he'd sired one male, and I didn't know how he dealt with the fear. I could barely remember my dam; she'd died young even by our standards. When she was eighteen, a sickness swept through the enclave, likely carried by the trading party from Nassau. It took a lot of our people that year.

Some citizens thought the offspring of Breeders should stay in that role. There was a quiet movement among the Hunters to take their number from their own—that once a Hunter got too old for patrols, he or she could sire the next crop of Hunters. I'd fought my whole life against that thinking. From the time I could walk, I'd watched the Hunters going off into the tunnels and known it for my destiny.

"It's not my fault I'm handsome," he said, grinning.

"Stop, you two." Thimble got out a present wrapped in faded cloth. "Here."

I hadn't expected this. Brow raised, I took...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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