



The Quiet Limit

Trista Lundquist

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In the startling dystopian novel The Quiet Limit, a doomed teenager confronts her faux-utopian society's terrifying secret.

In Trista Lundquist's novel *The Quiet Limit*, a girl in an idyllic society confronts her mortality as her time ticks down.

In the wake of the near extinction of humanity, the survivors rebuilt. They outlawed any further genetic tampering but still allowed for testing a given person's potential lifespan. The YOD—Year of Death—recorded at birth would dictate not just how long someone would live, but also their place in society.

Lai's YOD number is one of the lowest ever recorded—eighteen. This is even more shocking since her older brother's number is a near record: 113. Thus, Lai wakes on her eighteenth birthday knowing it will be her last, but not knowing precisely how much of the coming year she still has.

With such a low number, Lai is all but ignored by everyone but her family and is given relative freedom. She is indifferent to school, though she helps her high-numbered best friend Evera academically. A chance encounter and an ancient letter, however, set Lai onto a dangerous path. She discovers secrets festering within her seemingly utopian community and within her own memories.

Lai's looming death is present from the first page. She is introspective and empathetic despite her age, and her insights into other people are keen. But as Lai shifts from accepting her death to discovering where her society's missing people went, she becomes secretive, not wanting to attract undue attention. Still, she catches the eye of one of the elders in charge of overseeing the community.

Most of the worldbuilding is expository, delivered through scenes covering Lai's education and hearsay from outsiders. But Lai's textbooks have been censored, and ignorance reigns. Because most people are content with what they're provided, understanding about what led to this society is limited, even suspect.

While Lai is a compelling heroine, her friends and family members are known most through their interactions with her; their development is limited as a result. Her parents strive to stay positive; her brother is favored despite the family's clear love for Lai too. Lai's friend Evera generates more interest when she eschews her privileged social status to connect with Lai over learning; she garners derision from her peers as a result.

The novel's tension comes as result of Lai's looming deadline. This makes her investigation and romance more intense. She worries that she doesn't have enough time or resources to find the truth; further, additional mysteries arise with each bit of learned information. A revolutionary figure is the impetus for the story's final expansion.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (July 4, 2023)

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