



Wither (The Chemical Garden Trilogy Book 1)

By Lauren DeStefano

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What if you knew exactly when you'd die? The first book of The Chemical Garden Trilogy.

By age sixteen, Rhine Ellery has four years left to live. A botched effort to create a perfect race has left all males born with a lifespan of 25 years, and females a lifespan of 20 years--leaving the world in a state of panic. Geneticists seek a miracle antidote to restore the human race, desperate orphans crowd the population, crime and poverty have skyrocketed, and young girls are being kidnapped and sold as polygamous brides to bear more children.

When Rhine is sold as a bride, she vows to do all she can to escape. Yet her husband, Linden, is hopelessly in love with her, and Rhine can't bring herself to hate him as much as she'd like to. He opens her to a magical world of wealth and illusion she never thought existed, and it almost makes it possible to ignore the clock ticking away her short life. But Rhine quickly learns that not everything in her new husband's strange world is what it seems. Her father-in-law, an eccentric doctor bent on finding the antidote, is hoarding corpses in the basement; her fellow sister wives are to be trusted one day and feared the next; and Rhine has no way to communicate to her twin brother that she is safe and alive.

Together with one of Linden's servants, Gabriel, Rhine attempts to escape just before her seventeenth birthday. But in a world that continues to spiral into anarchy, is there any hope for freedom?

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Exclusive: Cassandra Clare Reviews *Wither*



Cassandra Clare is the author of The Mortal Instruments series. The latest addition to the series is *City of Fallen Angels* (*Mortal Instruments*, Book 4).

Lauren DeStefano's new book, *Wither*, heralds the coming of a promising new voice in young adult dystopian fiction. *Wither* introduces us to Rhine Ellery, age sixteen, who lives in a world decimated by the results of genetic engineering. In an attempt to render humanity almost immortal and disease-free, scientists accidentally introduced into human DNA a ticking time bomb — all women live only to age twenty and men to age twenty-five. In this world, riddled with brutality and stricken with poverty, girls are married off as young as thirteen and forced to bear children in a desperate attempt to keep humanity ahead of the wave of disease that threatens to eradicate them.

Lately readers have been seeing an influx of books handling new and old topics in a different, more female-centric way. Part parable, part warning, *Wither* puts women and girls at the heart of a dystopian tale mixing progress and disempowerment, science and secrecy. After being kidnapped from the home she shares with her twin brother, Rhine is "sold" to a rich man, Linden, along with two other girls, Cecily and Jenna. Their polygamous marriage is seen as necessary, for Linden's father is a scientist trying to find a cure for the "virus" that strikes down youth, and he needs new subjects for his experiments — subjects in whose DNA, he hopes, a cure can be found.

The day-to-day lives of Rhine and her sister-wives — parties, pregnancy, babies — contrasts starkly with the shadow of death that looms over every action. Even Rhine's growing romance with a servant, Gabriel, could lead to vicious punishment for them both — as could her repeated attempts to escape her gilded prison. This story, the first of a trilogy, leaves us with a glimmer of hope but no easy answers.

From [Booklist](#)

When scientists engineered genetically perfect children, everyone thought it would ensure the future of the human race. Though the first generation is nearly immortal, a virus causes all successive generations to die early: age 20 for women, 25 for men. Now, girls are kidnapped for brothels or polygamous marriages to breed children. Rhine is taken from her hardscrabble life and sold with two other girls to Linden Ashby. Though they live in a palatial Florida home surrounded by gardens and treated like royalty, the girls are sequestered from the outside world, and Rhine longs to escape. Her growing affection for her sister wives, her pity for Linden, and her fear of Housemaster Vaughn, Linden's manipulative father, keep her uncomfortably docile, until she falls for servant Gabriel. This character-driven dystopia, more thoughtful than thrilling, sets up an arresting premise that succeeds because of Rhine's poignant, conflicted narrative and DeStefano's evocative prose. Many will appreciate the intense character drama; however, the world building is underdeveloped, with holes in internal logic. Still, this first title in the Chemical Garden Trilogy will surely be popular. Grades 9-12. --Krista Hutley

Review

[A] thought-provoking debut, reminiscent of *The Handmaid's Tale* with a touch of *Big Love* . . . Rhine's fight for freedom against the clock--and the dissecting table--will leave readers eager for the sequel. Give this one to fans of *The Hunger Games* trilogy or Ally Condie's *Matched* (2010). - "KIRKUS, "February 1, 2011

"Creepy and elegant, shocking and romantic, dreadful and rewarding, and delivers unexpected twists. It'll leave you longing for book two."

--Lisa McMann, New York Times bestselling author of the *WAKE* trilogy and *CRYER'S CROSS*

"I really enjoyed *Wither*, I just couldn't put it down! Rhine is such an amazing main character. She is strong, passionate and determined.... *Wither* is nothing short of breathtaking. "

--sparkling-reviews.blogspot.com

"[Rhine] proves herself to be a heroine who faces her situation with spirit and cleverness. The trapped bride and mysterious husband are straight out of Gothic romances. By stirring in elements of sheer creepiness with dystopia and the hot topic of polygamy, DeStefano creates a story that should have broad appeal."

--"School Library Journal"

""Wither" is an exceptional novel that begins with a bang and doesn't let you go--it's gut-wrenching, shocking, incredible, and completely and utterly absorbing all at once.... DeStefano is a fearless writer, and though it is firmly its own book, "Wither" will remind readers of Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale"."

--TheCompulsiveReader.com

"This beautifully-written debut fantasy, with its intriguing world-building, well-developed characters and intricate plot involving flashbacks as well as edge-of-the-seat suspense, will keep teens riveted to the plight of Rhine and her sister wives. The compelling cover will draw them in and the cliffhanger ending will leave them eagerly awaiting volumes two and three of "The Chemical Garden Trilogy". This thought-provoking novel will also stimulate discussion in science and ethics classes."--VOYA

"This absorbing page-turner may remind some readers of Suzanne Collins' "Hunger Games" with its fearless heroine, sinister villain, bleak landscape and poignant romance. "Wither" is less violent but is in many ways

even more terrifying as DeStefano proves herself a master of plot, setting, character and psychological suspense." --"The Buffalo News"

A "harrowing debut . . . DeStefano has an observant and occasionally pitiless eye, chronicling the cruelties, mercies, and inconsistencies of her young characters. . . . It will be intriguing to see how DeStefano develops [the larger world] as this promising trilogy progresses."

- *PW STARRED review, January 10, 2010

"Lauren DeStefano crafts an all too believable future. I loved the world, the romance, the writing -- exactly the kind of book I've been craving to read."

--Carrie Ryan, New York Times bestselling author of THE FOREST OF HANDS AND TEETH

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jean Cunningham:

Do you certainly one of people who can't read enjoyable if the sentence chained inside straightway, hold on guys this specific aren't like that. This Wither (The Chemical Garden Trilogy Book 1) book is readable simply by you who hate those straight word style. You will find the info here are arrange for enjoyable looking at experience without leaving perhaps decrease the knowledge that want to give to you. The writer regarding Wither (The Chemical Garden Trilogy Book 1) content conveys prospect easily to understand by lots of people. The printed and e-book are not different in the articles but it just different such as it. So , do you still thinking Wither (The Chemical Garden Trilogy Book 1) is not loveable to be your top list reading book?

Billie Gould:

Information is provisions for individuals to get better life, information nowadays can get by anyone from everywhere. The information can be a expertise or any news even restricted. What people must be consider while those information which is inside former life are difficult to be find than now's taking seriously which one works to believe or which one the particular resource are convinced. If you get the unstable resource then you buy it as your main information you will have huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen inside you if you take Wither (The Chemical Garden Trilogy Book 1) as the daily resource information.

Heidi Crenshaw:

Is it a person who having spare time then spend it whole day simply by watching television programs or just laying on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This Wither (The Chemical Garden Trilogy Book 1) can be the answer, oh how comes? The new book you know. You are therefore out of date, spending your spare time by reading in this brand-new era is common not a geek activity. So what these books have than the others?

Tyler Cote:

As a college student exactly feel bored in order to reading. If their teacher expected them to go to the library or make summary for some guide, they are complained. Just minor students that has reading's soul or real their pastime. They just do what the teacher want, like asked to the library. They go to generally there but nothing reading really. Any students feel that examining is not important, boring and can't see colorful pictures on there. Yeah, it is to become complicated. Book is very important in your case. As we know that on this age, many ways to get whatever you want. Likewise word says, ways to reach Chinese's country. Therefore this Wither (The Chemical Garden Trilogy Book 1) can make you feel more interested to read.

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