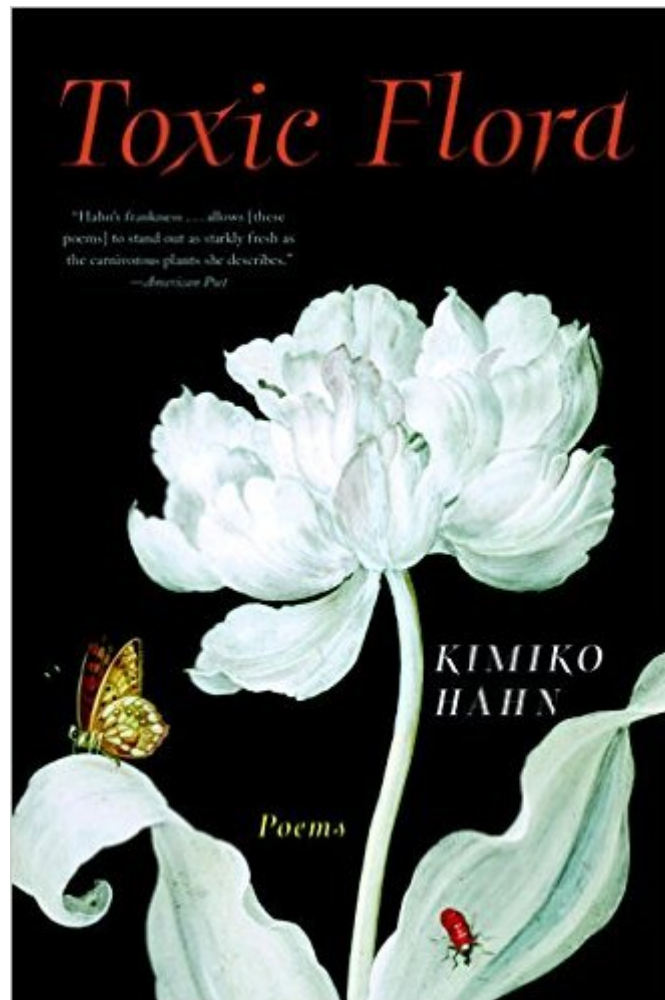


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Toxic Flora: Poems



Synopsis

â œ[Kimiko] Hahnâ™s frankness . . . allows [these poems] to stand out as starkly fresh as the carnivorous plants she describes.â •â •American Poet For Kimiko Hahn, the language and imagery of science open up magical possibilities for the poet. In her haunting eighth collection inspired by articles from the weekly â œScienceâ • section of the New York Times, Hahn explores identity, extinction, and survival using exotic tropes drawn from the realms of astrophysics, mycology, paleobotany, and other rarefied fields. With warmth and generosity, Hahn mines the world of science in these elegant, ardent poems. from â œOn Deceit as Survivalâ •Yet another species resembles a female bumble bee, ending in frustrated trystsâ • or appears to be two fractious males which also attractsâ •no surpriseâ • a third curious enough to join the fray. What to make of highly evolved Beauty bent on deception as survivalâ •

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Customer Reviews

In Toxic Flora, the strange and the familiar, the natural and unnatural, come together in startling and miraculous ways. In poem after poem, Hahn's meditations of the natural world segue seamlessly into insights about family life, relationships, and identity. The alienness of flowers that smell like flesh to attract bugs, or the ruthlessness of a praying mantis that eats its mate after copulation, become unsettlingly intimate when these poems make them metaphors of human nature. In "Sibling Rivalry" the warring wasp larvae that attack each other is compared to "siblings that obliterate everyone over dinner conversation." I love the very moving "Pinguinis Impennis" where the last pair of great auks is beaten to death in order to supply feathers for feather beds. "What dreams are

worth such extinction?" the speaker laments, "And are they dreams I'd wish to own?" I like the longer poems such as "Demeter's Cuttings" which explores the relationship between a mother and daughter as the daughter grows up and begins leaves the mother, as well as "The Sweetwater Caverns" where the speaker articulates secret longings while within the confines of family life and middle age. In these poems the natural world opens up the inner landscape and make these psychological dramas more concrete and tragic. In many poems I wish the poems dwelled a little bit longer on the subject matter and opened them up further. Most of these poems are short, with irregular lines and paragraph breaks which gives them a kind of tense quality. The abundance of stanza breaks creates a lot of silence and staccato in these poems, so that instead of reading the lines fluidly to the end, you stop and start a lot, putting greater emphasis at the beginning of each couplet.

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