



Combatives

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About the Author:

Allison Carter lives in Los Angeles, where she teaches a workshop in hybrid forms at CalArts and designs web sites for arts organizations. She is the author of *A Fixed, Formal Arrangement* (Les Figs, 2008) and a chapbook *Shadows Are Weather* (Horse Less Press, 2008). She co-edits P S Books with Joe Potts. Her work can also be found in *Fence*, *5_Trope*, *P-Queue*, and other places.

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The Nests “The birds, they are so colorful — red, and blue, eating the mulch every morning, I think they are making a nest!”

Sometimes you wrap the next hour with the previous, tightly, with care, while outside a disappointing tarp lets little drops down, and every single one of the animals is rightly sleeping through it. Sometimes it's like a pit fruit inside out, whichever end you are on. Or sometimes they are also like the whole family at the table, sliding worms across to each other, the shiny trails at eye-level.

Mine is a depression in the ground made of twigs. I found a pile of sweaters, why, if I had my way. Sometimes it's like naming a feeling by its family name.

Sometimes it is like my own little house, with its own little door.

Sometimes it is also lucky, like catching berries on the road. Sometimes it is also like interlacing strips of woven jute.

The insane deep resistance, one of those horrible rides over Laurel Canyon, the space between intimate. In twigs. The birds do seem short-pitched today. On the edge of their rocky ledge. Even a dopey bird could be the key to love if it would just take care, leave the empty rooms empty.

Sometimes it is also like a room full of people picking from the day. Poised on a rocky ledge, you and your mouth, I loved the breathing hollow. I helped you lose weight quickly. There is something wrong with this nest — it is built inside out — it is saddle red, redwood red on the outside.

Sometimes it is like a color-bound live rug, folded. Sometimes it is also like a very small enclosure walled by found objects — no windows or even a roof. Sometimes it is also like a single egg; you open your eye in the morning and it's a single blue egg.

Sometimes it is also like all our soft
procedures hitting each other in the wind.
Sometimes they also look like gourds,
swinging and nettled. Sometimes they also
look like lamps ringing. Sometimes they
also look like a bowl of miso on a coastal
red floor.

Deadlines in the drawer where you go
instinctively, after another hard night of
it I can look into the room where I'm not.
See a bird lighting on the flat table. There
is no string long enough, no pouch the
secret will fit in.

The birds do seem short-pitched today
— on the edge of their rocky ledge. Even
a dopey bird could be the key to love if it
would just take care and leave the empty
rooms empty.

Sometimes nests are like bowls of glass or
plastic. Sometimes they are warm like a
meal on.

Sometimes they also bend and sway. There is a crack in free time, or a cat at a feather under the door. Suddenly the sound moves at speed and the sound hay makes when it sways will curl off in a direction. Little gatherings occur and homes.

Sometimes they grow when there's an entire body with instructions. Or you cut and they linger, expending like soda. With more than 20 years of experience, both hands travel down a corridor and there is ample clinical space, a thermometer for when duplicates grow.

While I work from the nest, on the other
screen something clicks into town: a solid
in the streaking airport, eyes ahead, going
straight from the gate to the baggage, using
walkways like an old brown jacket, seeing
its breath and then silently very quietly.

Sometimes they also remind me of a row of alphabetized organs, beating. On the sterile days that rummage around the year — Sometimes, on the rushed through days, you can discover something such as weapons. This nest is tucked into Cerro Gordo Ave like a map is tucked into an orifice.

Sometimes you find a whisker from a bear
and look around. Sometimes a cloud rolls
over. Sometimes drops keep up a boil
between the feathers in the blanket.

Sometimes nests remind me of exceeding
the common birdsong.

Like a rack with a paper holder, with a cup
holder, with a soap holder and hook, with
a magazine rack and paper holder.

Sometimes the taste of raw egg whets my
mouth early morning.

I spread a blanket: come closer because I
have heat in the blanket — the blanket —
I could boil it.

Sometimes I think there is something
wrong with this nest — this baby I mean
—it is built inside out — it is brick red,
scarlet red all over?

Sometimes it is also like there's nothing
smashing up the cubic, nothing smashing
up the triangle of arrangement between
eyes and a desired or foreign thing.

Sometimes nests are like roots made of plastic bags that the dog shredded. Sometimes they are like moth holes puckering the seams and when you step on one they make a sound like the heat turning on. And when you hold one in your hand, you only know it's there by deduction. Sometimes you have to do some experimenting before even figuring out the oven, or, rarely, you can slide across them in your socks, wary of crashing into the mirror. Sometimes you can blow on one and it will yowl.

A nest can be lined in petals. It can have
inside our neighborhood attributes. I think
I know this nest! This nest: I want to act
on it but I have no way of getting it home?

Sometimes a nest has all the necessary characteristics required for a given situation. The way plastic sucks in and out of: can you hear it: a knot returning yearly as shrubs! I feel thick to be vineing, so, upon your limbs and all the little arteries, I listen to the nest plugging through time, making a weather sound. Seasonally the introspective, obsessing about construction, about the assembly and the sleazy delivery details —

Sometimes, when I see a nest through the incubator glass, I feel my heart acquitting itself; I reach automatically for my wallet. Sometimes I feel nostalgic for the nest. Sometimes, I think, it might be available cheaper from the other perpetual warm spot. What do you say, a little to the left, he was the best, better than you, skating the thin ins and outs? I can hold it forever, though, letting twine stuff the column after each season.

I went out of my every day way. Fleece in
the shell as the sun went down, hourly, and
the layer set: I spread down, Waved as I
came down the drive to you.

If you didn't wave back, I said, I would boil the nest, it was nerve-racking. And I had some put aside, as was the way.

Cold nestled in. I kept my eyes on the bright door as we all began the setting process. I will not lie, it scared me. Like a kindling sound, newspaper in an empty bedroom, turning red.

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