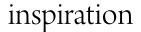
## The Messenger

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-Mai anh Tran

It takes a lot of hubris To dive into strangers' heads through ink and paper Digging up those last few tricksy trickles of meaning (ceci n'est pas un font) To offer—on a silver platter, naturally— To your muse.

You need astonishing presumption To dare mimesis of another soul— Living or dead? Check it empirically; Great or pathetic? Slightly more difficult. That's what sorting (with greedy hunger) Through the ashes of someone's words will do To you.

Just don't forget to breathe down there Don't let yourself get pulled head-below There in the guttering fires That's what you get —the revenge of old dead thoughts—

Who said you were allowed to be a phoenix?

## Ctober 9

Finally, we are alone.

I'm sorry for keeping you in that box for so long (I know how dark and lonely it must have been), but you have to understand that Mrs. Warden hates it when I leave, even if it's just to go down the street to the market. She's a very unreasonable landlady that way. If she knew it was me that stole her keys and made the hole in her fence, there's no telling what she would do to both of us!

Picture Frame

But the important thing is that you're here in my room now, safe with me. When I saw you tucked away on the shelf behind the fruit stall and the peanut seller, I could almost feel your sadness. A filthy pile of torn scraps and secondhand toys is no place for a goddess. I even took the time to wrap you up in two pieces of old newspaper dated April 20, 1999 and held you like a delicate infant the entire walk home. I'd have tried to find a bigger box, but I had to get home before Mrs. Warden woke up. She's always disagreeable after a long sleep.

I think I'll place you high up on the wall facing north. Yes, just so. I'm sorry to defile you with my clumsy hands. I won't touch you again. Now you can see the rest of my room. I admit it has seen better days. The wallpaper has started to turn yellow and peel and my little bedtable has faded dreadfully in the sunlight. And