

DEFUNCT PREVENTION

(Trần Nghi Âu Cơ)

I get really uncomfortable when people tell me, with certainty, that one day they'll see my name in print on the cover of a book. I know they mean well. But I'm not even sure I want my stories to be accessible to that wide an audience. The burden of that many eyes on something that came from the deepest alcoves of my mind and heart is almost unbearable. Ginsberg's character in the movie *Howl* said it best, "I assumed it wouldn't be published so I could write whatever I wanted."

I don't willingly show a lot of people my creative stuff, only to those I absolutely trust or feel a certain affinity with. It's not because I think my writing's too good for people, but because I feel my writing holds all my secrets, intentional or not. I need to really trust people in order to let them see that part of me. It's like handing over guardianship of my kid. (Of course, there are times when I don't have a choice like workshop classes or the rare times when I close my eyes and press send without giving myself time to think.)

There's a line in *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* where the artist says something to the effect of, "A work of art reveals more about the artist than the subject." That's absolutely true in my case and it's extraordinarily unnerving.

I don't really write to get published. I write to write. I write to loosen the pressure valve of my heart. I write to release the laughter and tears and giddiness and uncertainty. I write because I don't know what else to do if not write. I write because when I don't, I become a defunct, less complete version of myself.

And maybe, on some arrogant, subconscious level, I write because I hope that in a subtle, quiet way, my secrets can change the world.

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