

THE ROOM

In that place between wakefulness and dreams, I found myself in the room. There were no distinguishing features save for one wall covered with small index card files. They were like the ones in libraries that list titles by author or subject in alphabetical order. But these files, which stretched from floor to ceiling and seemed endless in either direction, had very different headings.

As I drew near the wall of files, the first to catch my attention read "People I Have Liked." I opened it and began flipping through the cards. I quickly shut it, shocked to realize that I recognized the name written on each one.

Suddenly I realized this lifeless room with its small files was a crude catalogue system for my life. Here were written the actions of my every moment, big and small, in a detail my memory couldn't match.

A sense of wonder and curiosity, coupled with horror, stirred within me as I began randomly opening files and exploring their contents. Some brought joy and sweet memories, others a sense of shame and regret so intense that I would look over my shoulder to see if anyone was watching.

A file named "Friends" was next to one marked "Friends I Have Betrayed." Other titles ranged from the mundane to the outright weird. "Books I Have Read." "Lies I Have Told," "Comfort I Have Given," "Jokes I Have Laughed At." Some were almost hilarious in exactness: "Things I've yelled At My Brothers." Some I couldn't laugh at: "Things I Have Done In Anger," "Things I Had Muttered Under My Breath At My Parents."

I never ceased to be surprised by the content. Often there were many more cards than I expected. Sometimes fewer than I hoped. I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the life I had lived. Could it be possible that I had the time in my 17 years to write each of these thousands or even millions of cards? But each card was written in my own handwriting and signed with my signature. When I pulled out the file marked, "Songs I Have

Listen To,” I realized the files grew to contain their contents. The cards were packed tightly, and yet after two or three yards, I hadn’t found the end of the file. I shut it, shamed not so much by the quality of music, but more by the vast amount of time I knew that file represented.

When I came to the file marked “Lustful Thoughts,” I felt a chill run through my body. I pulled the file out only an inch, not willing to test its size, and drew out a card. I shuddered at its detailed content. I felt sick to think that such a moment had been recorded. An almost animal rage broke in me. One thought dominated my mind: “No one must see these cards! No one must ever see this room! I have to destroy them!” In an insane frenzy I yanked the file out. Its size didn’t matter now. I had to empty and burn the cards. But as I took it at one end and began pounding it on the floor, I could not dislodge a single card. I became desperate and pulled out a card, only to find it strong as steel when I tried to tear it. Defeated and utterly helpless, I returned the file to its slot.

Leaning my forehead against the wall, I let out a long self-pitying sigh, and then I saw it. “People I Have Shared The Gospel With.” The handle was brighter than those around it, newer, almost unused. I pulled on its handle and a small box no more than three inches long fell into my hands. I could count the cards it contained on one hand. Then the tears came. As I began to weep, the sobs came so deep that the hurt that started in my stomach shook all through me. I fell on my knees and cried from the overwhelming shame of it all. The rows of files shelves swirled in my tear-filled eyes. No one must ever know of this room. I must lock it up and hide the key.

Then as I pushed away the tears, I saw Him. No please, not Him! Not here! Oh anyone but Jesus. I watched helplessly as He began to open files and read the cards. I couldn’t bear to watch His response. In the moments I could bring myself to look at His face, I saw sorrow deeper than my own. Why did He have to read every one?

Finally He turned and looked at me with pity in His eyes. This was a pity that didn’t anger me. I dropped my head, covered my face with my hands and I began to cry again. He walked over and put His arm around me. He could have said so many things, but He didn’t say a word. He just cried with me. Then He got up and walked back to the wall of files. Starting at one end of the

room, He took out the files one by one, and signed His Name over mine on each card.

“No!” I shouted as I rushed to Him. All I could say was, “No,no,” as I pulled the card from Him. His Name shouldn’t be on these cards. But there it was, written in red—so rich, so dark, so alive. The Name “Jesus” covered mine. It was written with His Blood. He gently took the card back.

He smiled a sad smile and continued signing cards. I don’t think I’ll ever understand how He did it so quickly, but in an instant I heard Him close the last file and walk back to my side. He placed His hand on my shoulder and said, “It is finished.” I stood up, and He led me out of the room. There was no lock on its door. There were still cards to be written.

Author Unknown