



So Now I'm On Probation?

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Meeting Mother Rosa

Two excerpts from  
the upcoming book  
Growing Up in Prison

by Seth Yates

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at about equal rates. I was hoping to throw off the results. It didn't work.

" Congratulations! You're so mature! " the Probation Officer enthused, having returned after dashing off to consult with her answer key. I couldn't see why. Probably, the answer key was just a prop and she was operating on pure discretion. " Why is that a good thing? " I asked glumly. " Well, now you will probably go to County Jail, and be around people your own level, " she offered. I wasn't buying it.

" So I get to be around grown men? " I countered. " Right! " the Probation Officer exclaimed, glad I was seeing her side of things. " But that sounds awful. What if I get hurt? " She paused. " Well... " I wasn't done. " Plus, I was capped at 40 years before. Now I can get a whole life sentence. How is that better? " The Probation Officer snapped, " Well, just accept it! You are getting certified! " I snapped back " That's stupid! I lied on you stupid test anyway, marking random answers! "

" Now she was mad, her face bright red. " Stay in your place! You're a child, I'm an adult! So respect me! I'm your Probation Officer! " Clearly, she was upset, so I tried to diffuse the situation. " Apparently I'm an adult now, too, so you respect me now. Anyway, I'm not on probation, so go harass someone who gives a fuck. The Probation Officer quivered with rage, then snarled. " You're such a little smart-ass! " and stomped away. Whatever, she was going to fuck me regardless. At least it couldn't get any worse.

It got worse.

### **Meeting Mother Rosa Another Excerpt from Chapter 2 of Growing Up In Prison by Seth Yates**

A very small, brown and decrepit looking creature came to see me. Shuffling slowly into my cell, she instinctively positioned herself squarely in the doorway, dashing any hope of a quick escape. I estimated her age in the centennial range. This was going to be painful. I braced myself for impact.

Mother Rosa came in swinging. " You're so beautiful! " she drawled. Then, without missing a beat, gasped " Hail the holy mother! " I was at a loss for words.

" Umm... yeah? " I offered weakly, as Mother Rosa sized me up, obviously expecting an answer of some sort. Apparently satisfied, she spewed forth a sermon of epic proportions on the holy mother mary, jesus, the saints and the rest of the squad. Slipping from parable to parable, past to present, and sprinkled with undeveloped references to past experiences, her message lacked focus or cohesion.

Occasionally pausing with expectation in her eyes, I'd utter " Umm... yeah " often enough to keep her Eminence sated. All eternity manifested in those ten minutes of agony - pure psychological torture. My mind turned itself off in an act of calculated triage, leaving only my auditory system under assault. Perhaps sensing that my conscious mind was escaping her grasp, Mother Rosa compensated by increasing the sound volume of her speech and gesticulating wildly with her hands. Soon my eyes fuzzed out and I had a rather



surreal, out of body experience, as though I were watching the two of us from above.

Mother Rosa began to creep closer, and I had the irrational fear that she would attempt to hug me. Please, no! My limbic system went into overload as my fight or flight instincts kicked in. Fortunately, she just wanted to fob off a handful of pamphlets and a postcard sized icon of the virgin mary, signaling the end of our session. Every time I accepted one and smiled, hoping to placate her, it only renewed her vigor, leading to ever more pamphlets and materials. Eventually I must have accepted one or three of every item she had in that bottomless pit of a purse, because she sighed that she hadn't brought such and such items. I sighed, too. With relief.

" My name is Miss Rosaline, " she scoffed sternly, eyeing the slump in my shoulders that accompanied my sigh. " Thank you, Miss Rosaline. " I offered up meekly. " They call me Mother Rosa! " she insisted in an admonishing tone. " Yes, Mother Rosa. Thank you. " I corrected. " Bless you child, " Mother Rosa whimpered, placing a withered, clawed hand on my forehead before beginning to chant fervently in what I hoped was Latin. Her eyes slid in and out of focus as she fingered the beads of her rosary. Finally, she turned and shuffled slowly away, to press her case the next cell over. Poor bastard. I melted into the concrete of my bed. Mother Rosa was an experience I wasn't keen to repeat.

Tony waited a while before collecting me for our first chess match of the day, perhaps sensing that I needed time to recover my senses. He was rather excited that things had gone so well. Apparently not every teenager was so patient

The following day I went to school again. It was hard to believe that I was expected to learn anything at all. It was like they were just going through the motions so that some agency could file some paperwork proving that we were being educated. For whatever reason.

I was becoming frustrated with how easy the curriculum completing one worksheet after another for hours on end. My peers must have felt it too, because periodically they would act out and be punished with a Behavioural Time Out, or BTO, facing the wall with their hands behind their back. Or else they would just shut down entirely and would be escorted away to a 23:59, or a day in the cell. Failure to complete work wasn't " Refusing ", which was a formal term for resisting an escort. Wish someone could have told me that.

When it was finally over the Probation Officer met up with me again, intercepting me outside the Pod. She had gotten my mother's permission for me to take the certification test, the results of which would determine whether or not I would be tried as an adult. It was ironic that while I couldn't consent to the test that would determine my level of maturity, I would nevertheless be bound by the results.

The Probation Officer kept telling me how I would probably pass and how great that would be for me. Since I assumed that whatever the Officers thought was good for me was probably horrible for me, I resolved to fail on purpose. I either chose the most immature sounding answers or else answered at random. A lot of the questions seemed political in nature, so I split my answers with progressive and conservative causes



I was collected for school, which turned out to be nothing like the real thing. Part of a class, our place was to sit still and face forward in neat little rows and listen while the Teacher read from a textbook or presented things on a projector, and then passed out worksheets for us to fill out with information regurgitated from memory. Actually, it is pretty much exactly like the real thing. It was different only in that our class consisted of twelve boys and we were prevented in asking any questions unless prompted by the Teacher to do so.

Prevented by the Officer posted in the classroom with us, who also stopped us for socializing or working on personal projects even once our work was complete. Which was most of the time, actually, as the work appeared to be about a third grade level and everyone was several years beyond that, at least. Instead, when we finished one worksheet we were just given another, then another. Even real school wasn't this bad.

I spent the day being shuffled from one class to another. When it was all finally over I was approached by an older woman outside my pod. "Hi Seth! I'm your a Probation Officer!" She mentioned something like a name, which was misleading. Only people had names. A Probation Officer is still an Officer. "Hello. Am I on probation now?" I asked bluntly, wondering what the hell she wanted.

The Probation Officer wanted me to answer a handful of questions about myself. She would be crosschecking my answers with my mom. That last was said with an accusing look in her eyes. Also, the Probation Officer would be coming back with a certification test.

with the old priestess as I had been. Shocking, I know. I wish I had crass insensitivity to use as a shield against Mother Rosa's senile onslaught. How much easier would things have been if I just told her to fuck off? Of course, I would have felt guilty afterwards, and then Tony probably would be disappointed in me, too.

As though in sync with my thoughts, whatever kid Mother Rosa was currently pestering exploded in a stream of expletives, screaming the wannabe Mother Teresa figure out of his cell. Brave fellow. Protective of his spiritual advisor, Tony rushed to her defense. "I kept asking her to leave!" he shouted at Tony. "But you didn't have to cuss her out!" Tony shouted back. Their shouting match centered around variations of those two themes.

Eventually things would down, with Tony writing a case on Mother Rosa's victim as she settled on some poor soul yet another cell over...

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**So Now I'm On Probation?**  
**Except from Chapter 5 of Growing Up In Prison**  
**by Seth Yates**

I was worried actually. Anxiously I agonized away the long weekend, waiting for Monday to arrive. For what? Monday could not possibly be any different.

Monday could possibly be a bit different. The Counselor had come to see me, greeting me with a big smile. " I wanted to speak with you about going to school " she said sweetly. " What about school? " I asked suspiciously. I thought I already messed that up for the year.

The Counselor paused for a full second before answering, expression unreadable. " How would you feel about starting today? " she offered finally. I shrugged. "Why not? But what's the point? Can I still graduate? " The Counselor smiled wider. " Of course you can, Seth! Oh, and one more thing, " she added. " You'll have a meeting with your Probation Officer afterwards.

That caught me off guard. " What? I'm on probation now? " I asked stupidly. " A. Meeting. With. Your. Probation Officer." the Counselor repeated herself deliberately, through gritted teeth. She must have thought I was pretty slow. I resisted the urge to repeat myself through her own method, mocking her. After all, unlike some people, I was working on not being a sarcastic jerk. So instead I acknowledged what she said. " Oh... A. Meeting. With. My. Probation Officer. I guess I'm on probation now! " The Counselor scowled and stormed away. Oh, well. At least I tried.