



Will you guys adopt me? And will you adopt my son?

By Ines Aubert, Switzerland, 2014

Part One: Written in April 2013

For eleven years, Robert Pruett and I have been writing each other; we started when he had just arrived on death row at the age of 22. It took only a couple of years until I was the person who's been in contact with him for the longest and the most stably in his life.

In one of his first letters, Robert asked me: "Will you guys adopt me?" I read the question aloud to my children, and my son, 13 at that time, replied in all earnest that well, he would agree that we adopt him under the condition that he didn't have to share his room with Robert.

Robert laughed when I recently reminded him of his question and my son's answer.

I could tell stories about Robert for hours; it has been an intense time for sure; we've had a lot of ups and downs.

He's been spending time on level 3, got a handcrafted spear from another inmate shot in his head, has had girlfriends, fiancées, a smuggled cell phone in his cell, several homepages, and over the years has changed from a very young man - rather a juvenile - to a spiritually advanced person with a firm belief in the concept of the "power of now" and of separation being an illusion. And these are only a few keywords to refer to the ups and downs.

During our rollercoaster rides, Robert repeatedly called himself an asshole and promised that he would be my slave forever if only I would forgive him.

"Haha! OK, I must stay around at least a few more decades to repay you for all of the times I was an asshole!"

Robert is now 33 years old and has an execution date in a couple of weeks.

Honoring Robert's life and our friendship

The past couple of months, in our letters Robert and I started speaking about how to honor his life and our friendship. At one point, he asked me whether I would help to spread his ashes throughout Europe.

I immediately felt that this was not a good way for me to honor his life. I don't want to create a bond to places in other countries only because I happen to spread Robert's ashes there. Also, how would I find the right places to do so? It would burden me very much to have to find these places. Plus, I don't feel like caring about the reminders of his body.

So, I told him that I wouldn't help to do that, but that on the contrary, I wanted to honor our friendship by honoring life.

"It's really not crucial that I be cremated. I do love the idea of being on fire, and the dust of the body spreading through the world. You are right in saying that as energy it

doesn't matter. Let's see how it unfolds, okay? I'm not quite ready to be cremated... just yet. "

After some thinking, I realized that I could probably support a juvenile that is in the same situation as Robert was when he came to prison at the age of 16 with a sentence of 99 years.

This is where I believe that Robert's life could have been turned around through outside support. If he had had support, his behavior would probably not have led to being accused of killing a guard. This is what landed him on death row.

In his autobiography, Robert described how much in despair he was and how cruel it was to be a 16-year-old among older guys with hardly any outside support from his dysfunctional family.

So, I had the idea of having another kid benefit from my love for Robert and to become his "son", so to speak. I imagine that if Robert had been in the free world a little longer, he would have fathered a child and that this child would also be in prison now. So, I suggested to him that instead of travelling to spread his ashes, I would search and adopt "his son" and in so doing, adding life to a life and honoring him through this action.

Robert found my idea beautiful. He instructed me where to look for his son; he named the Clemens Unit and the age of 16 when he was in deepest despair.

I googled the prison and studied the list of inmates, looking for a 16-year-old with a long sentence like Robert had at that time.

And I found one: A boy who committed a crime at the age of barely 16 and who got a 20-year sentence. He was one of the youngest in this prison, and when I checked his information and read an article about him, I realized that there were a lot of similarities to Robert. Seth is blond with blue eyes like Robert. His father is in prison like Robert's, and he was described as being very smart like Robert. All of this confirmed my impression that he must be Robert's son.

I sat down and wrote a short letter to Seth, telling him about why I was writing to him and asking him whether he wanted to start a pen pal-ship with me.

Because Seth couldn't buy any stamps for Europe immediately, it lasted several weeks until he replied and it was hard not knowing why he didn't respond.

I sent Robert a copy of the article I found on the net about Seth.

Robert replied: "I cried reading this article about Seth. I wish him the best. Life is very hard for him right now; it is a very tough prison. So don't give up on this boy. Be patient. There's no telling what he's going through right now. "

After I received the first letter from Seth, I showed it to Robert and asked him for advice as to how to react. "After all, it's your son and not mine", I wrote in my letter to him.

"Haha. Yes, I'll help in every way with Seth! He sounds like a good kid. I hate that he got 20 years!! I feel a connection to Seth. I want him to overcome his environment, to learn

all he can from this experience, and I feel like you will be so great for him. Crazy to think that he wasn't even born when I was arrested! "

In his second letter to me, Seth wrote: "I would like to play chess with one of your pen pals if possible. If so, I call white A2-A4."

In his letter to me, Robert wrote: "That's funny that he wants to play chess with one of your pen pals! If I get a stay, I'll play him. But that A2-A4 opening is really weak. He won't stand a chance against anyone with a decent game."

Sometime later, Seth drew a picture for Robert and Robert in turn, via me, sent him a message: "Greetings and Respects Young Seth! It's crazy to think you're just 18! Happy birthday, by the way. Well, to think you can't do something, anything, is already conceding defeat. You'd be surprised at what you can endure, I think. Prison is no place for someone your age. This place conditions you to violence and aggressiveness. At least it did me. I wish you the very best in all you do and I hope you make it out of this place without any deep psychological scars."

After Robert received Seth's drawing, he wrote to me: "This drawing Seth did for me is awesome! He's a much more talented artist than I am. Please tell him I said thank you, that I was impressed by his skills and I encourage him to keep practicing! Let him know he's often in my thoughts and I'm sending positive emanations his way."

Part Two: Written in Mai 2013:

Eleven days before his execution, Robert received a stay of 60 days!

Besides the fact that this is fantastic and wonderful, it also gives Robert and his newly found son Seth more time to interact.

The outcome of the additional time that Robert received is still unpredictable. I wish so much that he could play that chess game with his son Seth and eventually teach him to make better opening moves....