

The Trick to Life

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The Trick to Life

by [orphan_account](#)

Summary

"The trick to life is to not get too attached."

Oh, but he got attached. He got attached, and he's never gonna let go of his family.

A human AU from the perspective of Thomas Light. The first part is very loosely based off of one of the concepts in the movie August Rush (which I would wholeheartedly recommend).

I'm gifting this to Lati because they gave me ideas, helped me write this, and were a beta reader. however they ate all of my chips and that is inexcusable

Notes

i wrote this in the span of three days while my friend lati watched. they laughed at my typos and refused to share their cheetos, which were originally mine. callout.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

'Dr. Thomas Light' was kind of a contradictory phrase. Honestly, he wasn't exactly a doctor anymore-- sure, he used to be a heart surgeon, but right now he was actually a mechanic, sort of. It didn't pay quite as well as the surgical job, but it was more or less a similar type of job-- but instead of fixing a person from the inside, he worked on fixing a piece of machinery from the inside.

When his dad had passed away, Thomas was around thirty years old, and no longer friends with Albert Wily. It was only then that Thomas had discovered that his grandfather used to run this old hotel from around the early 1900s, and it was handed down to his father, who never did anything with it. The hotel fell into serious disrepair over the years, and when Thomas had first showed up at the place, holding an old parchment will to the place in his hands, he could tell that the building hadn't been used as an actual hotel in years.

A hostel, maybe.

He had walked into the old place, and the first thing he saw was some kid run behind a staircase.

Turned out the whole place was inhabited by a bunch of kids that were completely homeless and without another place to live in. Most of them were around ten to fourteen, but a few of the oldest ones were sixteen to eighteen. The place was beyond fixing-- no, Thomas sincerely doubted that he'd be able to turn the place into a hotel again. He didn't want to run a hotel, anyway, and the fact that his father didn't sell the property while he was still alive baffled him.

That is, until he saw the kids.

He didn't try to talk to any of them the first time he came around, but the second time, he showed up with a bag of groceries and left it in the hotel foyer.

The next day the food was gone.

He started leaving food every day, until it started being too difficult to do financially. On Sunday, he left a note saying that he'd leave food on Sunday, two bags of groceries, and the kids would need to ration it. He trusted them to.

Eventually, after a couple weeks, one of the older kids approached him and thanked him for what he was doing. Thomas said it was the right thing to do, and the kid gave him a hug.

The kids started talking to him after that.

"Are coppers gonna come kick us out?" Thomas shook his head at the twelve year old who was hanging off of him, talking in a weirdly Bostonian accent.

"What's in the bag?" Thomas responded with 'food,' which begot an indignant noise from the eight-year-old who was standing behind him.

"Are you the team dad now?"

"The team what?" Thomas just looked at the fifteen-year-old who had asked the last question. Said fifteen-year-old just shrugged.

The whole place gained a reputation for being sort of a safehouse for kids, like runaways, homeless kids, et cetera, and more and more children started showing up to stay. Thomas supported the kids for about ten years, until it sort of plateaued and Thomas just got to watch the kids grow up for a few years. Some of them even got jobs, and took the really young ones under their respective wings. It was nice, watching all these kids grow up, but he wished he could do something more.

Then X showed up.

X didn't have a real name-- at least, he refused to tell Thomas. The scruffy little eleven-year-old showed up in the middle of the night while Thomas was showing up to check on the kids, with three other kids-- an indignant four year old and two infants, only one year old, with greasy brunette hair that clearly hadn't been brushed and eyes red-rimmed from crying. Thomas, vaguely horrified at the fact that these young children were all alone, wanted to call the police, but X had so fervently insisted that he didn't that Thomas just couldn't.

He moved out of his tenement that very week.

It didn't matter about his own well being, he told himself-- he could provide better food for the children anyways if he didn't have to pay for an apartment, anyhow.

A large piece of the building cracked off and fell onto the sidewalk about a year after that. It broke a pedestrian's arm. They didn't sue (thank god) but Thomas was given a set amount of time for repairs by the government. He didn't have the money or means to repair it, so he just left it, hoping nothing would happen. Something did happen, though. He got a notice that the land was going to be seized by the government, sold, and the building demolished for the building being a public hazard. He had three weeks.

Thomas had to gather all the kids into a circle and explain to them what was happening. The kids were absolutely devastated. X stood up among the rest and started to yell about how unfair this was. The rest of the kids joined in, and suddenly Thomas was surrounded by screaming children, some of them crying.

He felt very helpless at that very particular moment.

All he said was that the kids needed to leave before the building was demolished.

Three days before the demolition, the construction workers showed up and cordoned off the area. The kids managed to run, but some of them were stopped by policemen.

They all watched it go down.

Thomas asked X to come with him, with his siblings, that day.

"Mom left us on a street curb," X explained, "about seven days after Rock and Roll were born."

"Rock and Roll...? And Blues...? I'm guessing your mother was into music, then?"

"Yeah, I guess." X didn't elaborate. "She said we were going on a trip. We all got out. Drove for hours. Then we all got out, 'cept for mom. Then she just... left."

"Where was your father?"

"Dead. Missing. Don't know, don't care." His answer was tight, sharp. X seemed kind of touchy over the subject, so Thomas didn't press further.

"X, I may need you to do something for me."

"What?"

"I... I don't want you to think of this as favouritism, but you and your siblings are the youngest children to ever stay there."

"What's it to you?"

"I'm asking if you would let me adopt you and your siblings."

"...Oh."

Thomas supposed that he was going to need to get a house.

He was paid a pathetic amount as compensation for the building getting demolished. He used all of it-- and a lot of his own money-- to buy a tiny house near the outskirts of town.

"Your mother abandoned you and three other children, is that correct, Alexander?" was what the Child Services lady asked X incredulously, clicking her pen. X shifted uncomfortably--

mostly at the name-- and nodded.

"And you lived in an abandoned building for a year with other children."

"Yes."

"Did you know about this, Mr. Light? Records show that the building was yours."

"I only found about it a few days after there was an incident involving repairs. I wasn't willing to repair the building, so I just left it alone. I found X and his siblings that day."

"X?"

"Nickname."

"Alright then, why X specifically? Why not any other child?"

"They were the youngest, and X had three younger siblings to take care of. He is only twelve, after all." The lady nodded at that, understanding.

The paperwork went through without incident.

The first thing Thomas wanted to do after adopting the kids was send them to school. X had gone to school for a few years before his mom left him. Turned out that he had actually skipped a grade, so was able to enroll in seventh grade smoothly, without towering over the other kids. Blues was also old enough to go into kindergarten, so the two were enrolled into a K-8 school.

"I made a friend today," was the first thing X said after coming home from his first day back at school.

"Oh? Who is it?" Thomas looked up trying to wrench the TV remote out of Roll's somehow-titanium grip (surprising for a two year old).

"He told me to call him Zero."

"Was he nice?" Thomas asked, finally managed to get the TV remote away from Roll and handing her a stuffed rabbit toy instead.

"Yeah. And--"

"I beat up a bully today!" Blues announced, dropping his teeny backpack onto the busted-up couch, placing his hands on his hips and looking proud of himself.

"You didn't beat him up. You just yelled at him in the playground," X said to Blues, more to assure Thomas than anything.

"I beat him up with words!" Blues reiterated, pride refusing to falter. Thomas chuckled. "Is that so?"

"Yeah!" Blues exclaimed, climbing onto the couch and sitting beside Thomas. "He was being mean to this girl-- I think her name was Kelly--"

"Kalinka," X corrected. Blues waved him off.

"--and the guy-- his name was Bass-- started making fun of her because she talked weird, right--?" Thomas started, almost knocking Roll off of his lap but caught her just in time.

"Hold on--" he interrupted. "Bass? Is his first name Brad?"

"Izzat his name?" Blues tilted his head, looking like a small dog as he did so.

"What was his hair like?"

"Stringy," Blues said thoughtfully, tapping his chin exaggeratingly. "Like cheese sticks."

Thomas groaned and leaned back into the couch.

"What's wrong, dad? Was he being mean to you too? I'll beat him up for real for that!" Blues shouted, and was about to stand up when X shushed him.

"Zero's his older brother, actually." X told Thomas, who made another less-than-happy noise.

"So then that's Za--"

"Yeah."

"What's going on?" Blues cut in, wide eyes blinking in confusion.

“Bass’s father. I used to know him.” Thomas explained to Blues and X. “Albert Wily. He was a good friend of mine, and we were both doctors. And before that we were friends in high school.”

X sat next to Blues, listening intently.

“We had a... falling-out. I ended up quitting my job because of blood treatment.” Thomas sighed and pinched the spot between his eyebrows, leaning forward again. Roll made an indignant noise. “Some religions don’t allow for blood transfusions, and while I did my best to respect that, Wily was determined to do it. The family had paperwork and an ID for it and everything. Wily wasn’t trained to deal with alternatives. In fact, he had never heard of it before.”

He paused.

“The person ended up...” He trailed off. X nodded understandingly, and Blues tilted his head.

“The person what?”

“You’ll understand when you’re older,” Thomas assured the five-year-old, patting his shoulder. Blues crossed his arms, muttering ‘everyone tells me that’ before immediately launching back into his story about his incredible experience of saving Kalinka from a bully.

Blues turned seven and invited Bass to his party. X, now fourteen, shrugged, laughed, and told Thomas that Blues was just asking for trouble, given how the kid was, you know, the bully.

Bass just sat at the side of the room and looked somewhat petulant. Wily never showed up to pick Bass up from the party or drop him off, it was Zero, who met X at the door with Bass. X ended up inviting Zero inside and when X wasn’t helping with the party festivities he was playing video games with Zero in his bedroom.

Blues got a pair of shades from his father, and made the most excited noise.

Blues fell down in second grade.

Thomas got a call from a frantic teacher telling him that his son was being carried away in an ambulance. He’d had been running too strenuously, or had been playing a game too hard, or, or something, Thomas wasn’t sure.

He had a heart condition, the doctors told Thomas. He’s too young to operate on for it, they told him.

His son looked so fragile in that hospital bed. In movies, they’d show a person in a hospital hooked up to, say, an IV drip and a heart monitor, but nothing else. Au contraire, actually. The child was hooked up to so many machines to keep him alive that he looked dead already. Thomas was terrified.

Blues was told he couldn’t run as much as his friends, or do much of any kind of sports as heavy as his friends did. The kid had decided he wanted to be a soccer star over the summer after watching a game on the TV. Now he might even die. Blues did nothing but cry.

Thomas did not know what to do.

Weeks later, while Blues was cooped up in his room, finally allowed out of the hospital but being forced to rest, X had gotten a call from Zero. He had sounded incredibly tired over the phone.

“Can I come over?”

“Hold on, lemme ask my dad.”

Thomas said it was fine, as long as Zero’s dad was fine with it.

“He already said it was okay.”

Thomas couldn't help but feel like Zero had answered a bit too quickly.

Zero had shown up a bit too quickly than normal, too. He seemed borderline frantic, like he had left quickly, and holding way too much clothing in his suitcase.

Then Thomas had gotten a call from Albert.

"Is Zachary with you?" Albert asked, using Zero's actual name instead of his nickname.

"Yes. Why? You let him come over..." He trailed off. Nah. Thomas could already guess what had happened.

"No, I didn't. He ran away. I'll be over in a few. You live on Drewsbury, right?"

"Yes. I'll tell X."

Thomas sighed as Albert hung up. Zero was sitting on the couch, staring at the wall.

"Zero." Zero jumped, and turned.

"Your father called." Thomas said. Zero turned white.

"You didn't tell him I was here, did you?" he asked. Thomas sighed again.

"I did. He's coming over here."

Somehow, Zero managed to get paler.

Thomas walked over and sat beside the fourteen-year-old, before placing a hand on Zero's shoulder.

"Why did you run away?" he asked, and Zero looked like he was going to cry.

"I think we're moving."

Thomas paused. Oh.

"Where?" he said, carefully.

"I don't know. What if it's on the other side of the world?! Oh, god, Mr. Light, I'm never gonna see X again-- I'm gonna be all alone, I-- I don't think I could handle being alone with my dad--" Zero suddenly burst into tears, suddenly clinging to Thomas desperately, who just looked at him with concern and patted his back. Zero's hair was ridiculously long, having long since been pulled back into a long ponytail, blonde hair coming down past his shoulders even with said ponytail. He looked vaguely scruffy, in all honesty, but whether said scruffiness was borne out of rebellion or just self-neglect was lost on Thomas. The ranting just turned into incoherent devastated babbling as Zero sobbed, shaking like a leaf.

The doorbell rang. Zero sat up, and wiped his face on the inside of his shirt.

"Please, don't answer it," he pleaded, and Thomas felt himself wither.

"I know this is hard, Zero, but you can't run from this forever."

"You don't understand," Zero said, voice breaking. Thomas himself could feel his heart breaking as he stood up and answered the door. Albert stood there, hands shoved in his pockets, age having clearly not treated the man well. Thomas hadn't seen him in years, honestly, and he was looking much worse for wear than he remembered, hair sticking up in random places and age-spots riddling the man's forehead.

"Zachary is with you, right?" Albert asked, and Thomas nodded, jerking his head pointedly towards the couch. Zero sat there, looking pathetic.

"Son, we have to leave. You still need to pack up."

Zero didn't move. He had his back to the door.

"Zachary Wily, you get up this instant." Albert's tone shifted to that of a disciplinary one, and Thomas saw Zero's shoulders tremble for half a second. Zero stood, still not facing his father.

"I'm not leaving," Zero said quietly.

"I beg your pardon, young man?" Albert looked like exactly what he was: a pissed-off dad.

Thomas could sympathize with him-- if one of his kids ever ran away and Thomas found them, he'd be pretty ticked-off too. Though, he supposed he'd just be more distressed and relieved to find them than anything, so he supposed he couldn't completely sympathize with

Albert.

"I said, I'm not leaving!" Zero suddenly shouted, turning to yell at his dad, tears rolling down his cheeks and Albert looked shocked.

"I don't wanna leave this city-- I'm gonna be all alone if we leave, dad!"

"Zero?"

Everyone froze. X stood in the middle of the staircase off to the left, looking at Zero nervously.

"What's going on?"

"I don't wanna leave, X," Zero said in a choked voice, and X walked down the remaining steps and walked over to Zero.

"It's-- it's okay, you can come over another time," X assured him, and Zero shook his head.

"I'm moving."

X froze.

"What?"

"Dad said that we're moving, he didn't say where-- I don't wanna leave, X!" Zero shouted, throwing his arms around X and holding him tightly. Albert glanced at Thomas, who gave a half-shrug before turning back to the kids.

"Zero, your father and I are going to go discuss some things. Do you think you could go into the backyard with X?" Thomas said carefully, and Zero, sniffing, nodded.

Thomas and Albert sat out on the porch. It was a hot summer evening, the sun having already gone down, but the last legs of sunlight still visible in the sky. A mosquito zapper hanging from the porch awning shone softly in the evening, cicadas chirping in the distance.

"We aren't moving out of the city," was the first thing Albert had told him, and Thomas gave him a look.

"Why didn't you tell him that?"

Albert shot him that same look. "I was about to, but he, you know, ran away." Thomas made a noise akin to that of a scoff.

"When exactly did you drop this on him?"

"Yesterday."

"And when exactly are you moving?"

"Three weeks."

"Somehow, I feel as if you've made a mistake," Thomas said semi-sarcastically, and Albert grunted, crossing his arms.

"...Being a father isn't exactly a walk in the park, Thomas."

"You think I don't know that just as well as you do? I've been raising twice the amount of kids that you do, Albert." He supposed that adding that he took care of dozens of homeless kids for around ten years was a bit too much.

"...I have ankylosing spondylitis."

"What?"

Albert grunted again and looked at the ground. "My mother got it at around fourteen. Fourteen, Thomas. She was in pain for her whole life. It's hereditary, what if my kids get it? What if my kids's kids get it?"

"Albert, I've-- I've heard of that. It's arthritic, right? When did you get it?"

"About a year ago." Albert stared at the sky. "I've been taking medication for it. I just-- I don't want it to pass on through the bloodline, you know?"

They were both silent, and Thomas watched someone bike down the road.

"Seems medical shit always seems to follow us, eh, Dr. Light?" Albert joked, nudging

Thomas with his elbow.

"Please, Albert, we haven't been doctors for years. And-- and I'd appreciate it if you didn't curse like that."

"Whatever," Albert responded. "What's important is that you need to know that I didn't mean for... that... to happen."

Thomas sucked in a breath through his teeth. He knew what Albert meant.

"Al, do you think we could leave that can of worms closed?"

"Thomas, you just need to realize that it wasn't all my fault."

"You were trying to do a blood transfusion on a patient that rejected it for religious reasons. I had the means and method of doing it without, but you insisted."

"Please, Thomas. That woman would have died if she didn't get a transfusion."

"And she died anyway, because we were too busy bickering!" Thomas suddenly shouted, standing and looking at Albert, who started at the sudden raise in volume. Albert's face darkened and he stood and stared Thomas down.

"You know just as well as I do that that woman died because she was a fucking Jeh--"

"Do not curse in my household like that," Thomas said, gritting his teeth and looking Albert dead in the eyes. They continued staring each other down before Albert finally backed off, still looking pissed.

"It was not my fault."

"That's funny, because I don't remember it being mine, either, and it certainly wasn't the fault of the woman who had a heart attack."

Albert was silent.

"I'm going to take Zachary home, soon."

"You know, I think he prefers Zero."

"That name baffles me, Thomas. What kind of a name is Zero?" Albert groaned, and shook his head. "We both just want the best for our children, you know. I want my sons to grow up strong and healthy, meet a nice girl, get married, start a family, you know? Give me a couple o' grandkids I can be proud to share my family name with."

Thomas looked at him.

"I think the 'girl' part is rather out of the question, for at least Zero, Albert."

"What? What does that me--"

A high pitched scream interrupted Albert mid-sentence, and six-year-old Roll, turning around the corner of the house, messy high blonde ponytail bouncing as she ran, ran up to the porch and screamed:

"X and Zero are KISSING!"

Albert and Thomas looked at each other.

It had been a few days after the incident that Albert had shown up again, while Thomas was working in the garage.

"My son's a fag, Tom," Albert had lamented, and Thomas could feel himself tense up at the word. He had used that word in high school, but now, now he was older and knew that it wasn't exactly a word you throw around in a conversation like that.

"Al, I consider that a curse. Please don't."

"What, you think 'fag' is a bad word now?" Albert had said, drawing out the words 'bad word' out sarcastically. "God, you really have grown soft over the years. I remember when you and I were still freshmans I could say words like ni--"

"Albert."

"Whatever. You're in the same boat, Tom-- your son, Alexande--"

“He goes by X.”

“-- X, whatever, potato pot-ah-to, what’s important is that you have to deal with this bullsh-- baloney as well.” Albert crossed his arms, and Thomas set down the piece of machinery he was currently tinkering with.

“Albert, it’s 2008. Not 1964. Kids would get killed for this kind of thing back then, but it’s a different time.” He turned to Albert. “I want to respect the choices my children make, no matter what they choose to do.”

“Even if one of them is a murderer? A drug addict? A faggot?”

“Being a murderer is not the same thing as being gay, Al.” Thomas turned away, and continued poking at the machinery.

“Whatever. You may be tolerant of your kids making the stupidest decisions of their lives, at fourteen, no less, but I won’t have any son of mine be queer.” He spat out the last word like it tasted bitter in his mouth, and Thomas seized up again. After Albert finally left, Thomas sighed, breathing shuddery. The very conversation they just had made Thomas feel like he needed to take a shower. A long one.

He wondered why he was ever friends with that man.

Rush was a golden retriever, and Roll, now seven, had squealed loudly when she first saw him. Rock had somehow managed to squeal louder. The tiny puppy had warmed up to the twins immediately, and soon was following Rock around like a baby duckling, while Roll followed Rush around. Blues had just stared at the tiny dog like it was a tiny alien dog instead.

“Is this because Bass got a dog?” Blues asked, looking up at his father, arms crossed. Thomas considered this-- Treble was a German Shepherd purebred that Albert may have gotten for Bass for the sake of spoiling his one straight son rotten, despite the fact that Bass was ten.

“Of course not,” Thomas assured him, and he really meant it-- Rock and Roll had been begging Thomas to get them a dog for months. Besides, golden retrievers were a friendly breed. Rush would be a companion to them when Thomas couldn’t be there, he was sure. X stood at the top of the stairs and watched the puppy skitter around and yip.

“I feel wrong,” X told his father, sitting on the edge of his bed and holding his head in his hands. “Am I wrong?”

“Oh, X,” Thomas had said, heart sinking. He hated seeing his son like this.

“I’ve been wrong my whole life, dad. I’ve-- my own mom didn’t want me. Did she sense it? Did she know? Is it a thing you know when you have a kid? I’m-- I’m just...” He started to cry, and Thomas hugged him tightly.

“X, you aren’t wrong. You aren’t wrong at all. You just like a different type of thing. That’s not wrong, X.”

“But what about Zero?!” X shouted, pushing Thomas away. “Zero’s stuck in that-- in that place, with his dad, and-- and he doesn’t deserve this! We need to call the police, or child services, or, or--”

“X, if we call child services, there’s a very high possibility you may never see Zero again,” Thomas said calmly, and X sniffled.

“I know. I just-- I want to get him out of there. This isn’t fair.”

“It’s not fair at all. Zero doesn’t deserve this,” Thomas said softly, “But you need to know that none of this is your fault. This isn’t your fault, X.”

X started to sob.

Zero went and saw a counsellor at fifteen. He was referred to a doctor, who referred him to a psychiatrist.

He was diagnosed with clinical depression and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Zero had been running away from home to Thomas's house so often that sometimes Albert would intercept him and be waiting for him there.

Thomas hated the look in Zero's eyes when the two left.

He looked so tired.

One day, both X and Zero disappeared. X called Thomas and told them that they had rented a hotel room. Zero was having an episode.

Thomas had asked if they needed anything.

Zero got a job. He bought his own apartment at sixteen.

Blues was getting worse. The ten-year-old was finally old enough to get heart surgery that could save his life.

It also had a low chance of killing him.

When the doctors told him this, he looked terrified.

He begged Thomas not to let them do it. He didn't want to die.

The possibilities of Blues dying in the process was low. No matter how low it was, though, Blues was still terrified. Thomas himself was worried, of course, but the benefits far outweighed the risks. Blues had the chance of being somewhat healthy again.

Blues ran away to Bass's house on the twentieth of February, 2010. He didn't want to die, Bass was told. Blues didn't want to die on an operating table. He then left Bass's house and hid with Zero for two weeks.

Thomas cried in front of Blues for the second time in Blues's life when he found him again. The first time was when Blues had ended up in the hospital at eight.

Blues finally agreed to the surgery.

It went without incident.

Blues could run again.

Roll burned herself on the oven stove, and cried so loudly that Thomas thought she was dying. He panicked and rushed her to the hospital. She was fine.

Rock and Roll turned nine a few weeks after. They got a cat, a little calico kitten named Tango, and both adored the little thing like it was an angel. Rush, now half Roll's size, got indignant at the lack of attention, and ended up barking a lot to try and get Rock and Roll to pay attention to him.

One day, while Blues, Rock, and Roll were all at school, Thomas came home and didn't realize that X and Zero were also at his home. Thomas unlocked the door and walked inside, planning on eating at home for lunch, when he heard a noise from upstairs.

"Zero-- Z-Zero, I'm gonna--"

The words were followed by an unmistakable noise that made Thomas feel as if he had really walked in on something he shouldn't have.

He knocked on the wall and yelled upstairs: "You boys making sure that you're using protection?"

"DAD?!"

“Oh my god, Mr. Light, I’m so sorry--”

Thomas laughed and left the house. He’d leave them to their privacy.

Thomas took X to the side and looked at him very seriously.

“X, now that I know that the relationship you have with Zero has gotten more intimate, I need to warn you about--”

“--Dad, we’re both guys, I don’t think you have to worry about pregn---”

“--sending nudes.”

X started. “What?”

Thomas nodded like the concerned parent he was. “I read an article about it. If you’re under eighteen, sending nudes to someone-- even if the person is under eighteen as well-- is viewed as child pornography. You or Zero could get arrested.”

X scrunched his eyebrows together.

“Um. Okay, dad.”

Axl was a scruffy little 17 year old who was in the same Math and English classes as X and Zero. He immediately warmed up to Zero after meeting him, and Thomas walked in on Zero and X talking about him in the living room.

Zero compared Axl to a stray dog and X shifted uncomfortably at the words.

Thomas froze.

Zero didn’t know about X’s past.

He looked back at the dinner he was making.

X can tell Zero on his own time, he told himself. X has a right to privacy.

X still seemed uncomfortable, however.

Apparently Axl had made a move on Zero, completely unaware that Zero was with X. Zero had pushed him away after Axl tried to kiss him, and had explained that he was already in a relationship.

“He asked me if I was straight, X. Straight,” Zero had giggled, and X had snorted, potato chip crumbs briefly spewing out of his mouth. “Granted, I’m pretty sure he was joking, but still. Jesu-- uh, good lord.” Zero interrupted himself, glancing over at Thomas, who was walking down the stairs.

Thomas got a call from Noele Lalinde.

She had been one of his coworkers when Thomas was still a doctor, and actually still was a doctor herself. She also had a daughter that Roll had mentioned being friends with; a somewhat stoic girl named Tempo.

Thomas didn’t expect to get a call from Noele telling him, frantically, that Roll had broken her leg.

Roll had fallen off of a small bridge and hit her leg in an awkward position while on a walk through a trail with Tempo, who had panicked and called the police. It was a good thing, too, given that Roll had suffered a bone fracture. It wasn’t anything irreparable, however, she still did need to go to the hospital.

She looked actually kind of ticked off being forced to be in that hospital bed. Tempo and Noele were standing by the bedside as Thomas rushed in.

“Is she okay--?”

“I’m fine, dad,” Roll cut in, “I just hurt my leg. It’s nothing too serious, it was a one break,

they said. No shards or whatever.”

Thomas sighed. “How did this happen?”

Roll crossed her arms and said nothing.

Tempo cut in. “She was trying to balance on the side of a small bridge over a low ditch, lost her balance, and fell.”

Thomas pinched the space between his eyebrows.

Roll was only nine, he couldn’t exactly blame her for making a stupid decision, given that his nine-year-old self would have done the exact same thing.

“I’m just glad you’re okay, Roll.”

Tempo sat down next to her.

A few weeks later, Roll’s leg was healing nicely and Tempo seemed to be visiting more.

Blues turned eleven and was constantly going out to do things with Bass. Thomas thought it a little strange; Bass was the ‘bully’ Blues had ‘beaten up with words’ at five years old, but if Blues had a friend, Thomas wasn’t about to tell Blues to change his mind.

He just wished that his life wasn’t so connected to Albert’s, honestly. He had long since stopped talking to the man beyond what was necessary, and Zero was always the one who dropped Bass off at Thomas’s house if Bass and Blues wanted to play video games or something.

X and Zero turned eighteen, and when Zero finally came of age a month after X, Zero came over and wanted to go out for drinks until X told him that the legal drinking age was twenty one.

Thomas got them fake champagne as consolation.

Thomas came home to the sound of X crying and Zero’s extremely distressed voice, coming from the living room. Thomas ran over, frantic, until he saw the two of them on the couch. Zero had his hand on X’s back and the two were sitting on the couch, Zero looking terrified. He looked up at Thomas, eyes wide.

“He’s having a panic attack,” Zero said, as if it was a sudden revelation to him.

Thomas froze in the doorway, completely unable to move.

Rush padded over and rested his head on X’s knee, who didn’t move beyond shaking like a leaf.

“C-- can’t breathe,” X finally managed to say, and Zero asked him if he wanted a glass of water or a blanket.

He finally managed to completely calm down after thirty-three minutes, and X and Zero fell asleep covered in warm blankets, Rush sitting on X’s lap. Thomas glanced outside. It was snowing.

X and Zero were going to graduate soon.

X and Zero’s graduation went without much incident. A girl that Zero was friends with, Iris, was valedictorian. Zero had mentioned that Iris had gotten osteosarcoma in both of her legs, and lost both of them, and while her prosthetics weren’t visible due to the graduation gown, Thomas could sort of see it-- she did look a tad frail, but nonetheless stood tall and proud on the podium as she gave her speech.

Rock, Roll, and Blues were more or less just happy to get out of school early, and Rock made a loud noise on the car ride home at X, saying ‘you mean you don’t hafta go to school anymore?!’

Blues turned twelve and got in trouble for making fun of a girl, and Thomas got a call from a teacher. Apparently he'd thrown rocks at her and called her names.

He gave Blues a very firm talking-to that day, and confiscated his sunglasses and video games.

Blues then had a panic attack from not having his glasses.

Thomas made a mental note that the glasses wasn't something he should take again.

Thomas was in the garage, messing with something, when X walked in on him and told him that he had been accepted into the local university, and so was Zero. It was on the other side of the city, and Zero's apartment was closer, so X asked if it was alright to move in with him. Thomas turned to X and said "you're an adult, X, you're free to make your own decisions."

X nodded and gave his dad a hug.

It took a little while for X to explain to Rock and Roll that he wasn't going to be living in the house anymore. Blues stared from the top of the stairwell as Rock burst into tears and hugged X tightly, so tightly that the nineteen-year-old wheezed from lack of air.

On the day he was going to leave, Blues gave him a hug that lasted forty-six seconds.

Thomas watched Zero and X stop at the car at the end of the driveway, kiss for about seven seconds, before climbing into the car and driving off.

Thomas came home one day and Blues and Bass were kissing on the couch. Bass begged Thomas not to tell his father. Thomas, of course, promised not to.

Bass ran away from home after his father found out that he was dating Blues. He refused to leave Zero's apartment and panicked every time he saw his father's car at his school. He ended up having to go home after his father intercepted him.

He ran away a few days later again.

>12:56 AM, Oct. 19th, 2013

Albert: Both of my kids are gay, Thomas, am I doing something wrong?

You: Albert. The fact that your children are gay shouldn't be considered bad to you.

Albert: Zachary being a homo was bad enough, Tom. My bloodline's not going to be continued.

You blocked Albert

Immature, Thomas was sure, as he pressed the 'block' button, but any conversation he had with that man always made him feel disgusting. Hatred was a strong word, but he couldn't think of any better ones.

Besides, based on the illness Albert had, Thomas would be relieved his hypothetical grandchildren wouldn't be susceptible to it, if he was in Albert's shoes.

He supposed that Albert saw things otherwise.

Blues yelled at Thomas on Wednesday. It was May 16th, 2014, and Blues was fifteen. Zero and X were visiting for dinner, and after dinner, Blues had gotten mad at Thomas for teenager reasons, that of which Thomas couldn't remember.

Blues said Thomas wasn't even his real dad.

Apparently Zero had overheard.

Blues's shouts were suddenly drowned out by Zero yelling in the other room.

"We've known each other for over ten years, X, I think you should trust me enough to tell

me!”

Both Blues and Thomas froze, the yelling from downstairs shocking both of them. It was mostly one-sided, with Zero screaming bloody murder, until X cut in.

“Well, excuse me for not telling you my mother fucking abandoned me with three other kids!”

The yelling stopped.

Zero started talking again, but it was muffled, more quiet, and Thomas couldn’t quite make out the words, but halfway through his sentence, Zero’s voice broke and everything went quiet again.

Thomas walked upstairs and X and Zero were asleep in X’s old room, bodies tangled around each other. They were both flushed, and Thomas could tell they had both been crying.

Thomas wished he could fall asleep as easily as these two could, honestly.

>5:43 PM, May 18th, 2014

X: i’m going to tell Zero about the hotel and stuff. is that ok

You: Of course.

X: ty

You: What does that mean?

X: thank you

You: Alright, then, ty for telling me :)

X: ha nice

>10:34 PM, May 18th, 2014

X: i told him

You: How did he react?

X: he was more

X: shocked

X: than anything

X: like i just

X: sorry im not

X: hes crying

You: Are the both of you okay?

X: no hes just telling me he feels selfish

X: i told him i only lived like that for a year or so

You: Do you need me to bring you anything?

X: dad we’re not teenagers anymore we have our own place

You: Sorry.

X: its okay, im just

X: im an asshole sorry

You: X.

X: i know i know language

X: i kind of regret telling zero

You: How is he?

>11:03 PM, May 18th, 2014

X: hes better

You: You took a while to respond, is everything okay?

X: yeah, actually, we talked for a bit and dfghsdfgs

You: X?

X: brb

You: What does that mean?

You: X?

>12:09 AM, May 19th, 2014

X: it means be right back

X: and sorry

X: zero got um

X: very

X: affectionate

X: MOVING ON

X: ur probably asleep so i wont blow up ur phone, but basically we talked things out and he told me he just feels guilty about griping about his own problems, and i told him that what happened in my past shouldn't affect how zero feels about his own

You: That's very true, X, everyone's problems do matter.

X: OH YOURE AWAKE

X: ha thats true unless youre albert wily lmao

You: What does 'lmao' mean?

X: unimportant

X: and i told him what you just said (the first thing) and he just kind of sniffled and hugged me and we both cried for like ten minutes and then i was about to text you but i ended up um

X: talking to him again

You: Sure you were.

X: dont shame me

You: I'm not, X.

X: anyways

X is typing...

Thomas stared at his phone as the words blinked up at him. He realized that, if his father had sold that property when he was still alive, he would have never adopted X. He also realized that he might've been slightly richer, maybe living in a more comfortable environment, with less things to stress about, and that he wouldn't be talking to his son at midnight over texting, slightly bleary-eyed.

But he wouldn't trade his family for the world, this much he was ultimately certain about.

X: bass came in and started complaining that we were crying too loudly

X: he doesn't even k n o w

You: Why did you draw out 'know' like that?

X: emphasis

You: I see.

X: and now hes sitting on top of zero's back on his 3ds and playing animal crossing

X: no wait

X: yeah no its mario kart

You: That's a strange image. Can Zero move?

X: im sure he can but zero's on his phone. i dont think he cares lol

X: i think hes texting his dad

You: Oh.

You: Why?

X: no wait its animal crossing

X: bass just bragged that he changed one of the villager catchphrases to 'penis'

You: Lovely.

X: ha

X: but hes like fifteen @ bass what are you doing

You: Bass isn't here, X.

X: its a figure of speech. Anyways i think zero is texting to tell his dad that hes going to file a restraining order if he tries to get bass again

You: I see.

You: Wait

You: What?

You: X?

You: X, are you there?

Thomas set down his phone. X wasn't responding. He's probably fine, he just went to sleep.

He should probably go to sleep, too.

His phone pinged.

X: blues is here

You: What? I'll be right over.

He shoved his phone in his pocket and stood.

Blues was trying to run away again, he found out. He felt guilty for yelling at his dad and causing an even worse fight between Zero and X, and had shown up to be with Bass.

The two had disappeared into Bass's room the second Blues saw Thomas walk in.

"He can stay the night here, if you two are fine with it," Thomas said, sitting on the couch and looking around. The place was surprisingly nice, considering Zero had gotten it so cheap and they had a fifteen-year-old boy living there.

Zero promised Thomas that it was fine, and X nodded in agreement.

X kept flicking his gaze towards Bass's door, noting the lack of noise coming from it.

The day that Zero turned twenty-one, a month after X did, the two went out for drinks for the first time. They were very careful about it, making sure to call Thomas beforehand to ensure that he'd pick them up at ten from a bar, and when Thomas showed up, the two were very giggly and flirty drunks and ended up making out in Thomas's backseat for a few seconds before Thomas pushed them apart out of fear for his own car.

The two started whispering things to each other that Thomas could barely understand, but the couple words that he overheard made him crank up the radio to drown it out.

Thomas brought them up to Zero's apartment to make sure they didn't have sex in the living room or anything, but, surprisingly, they both fell asleep on the couch.

>10:45 AM, June 26th, 2014

X: uuuuughhghghghghghghgfdh

You: Hangover treating you well?

X: this is HARASSMENT

X: but you're old do you know any good hangover cures because i'm liable to chug drainage

cleaner rn

You: Please, don't.

You: Hold on, I have a good hangover cure from my father written down somewhere.

X: zero is clinging to the toilet and crying

X: do you think he's still drunk

X: oh

X: nop just hungover

>6:32 PM, July 7th, 2014

Unknown: Hello? Thomas?

You: Who is this?

Unknown: This is Albert. My phone broke, I got a new one. This is Thomas, correct?

Thomas hovered over the block button.

Unknown: Do you know if Zero's with you?

You: I seem to remember him threatening a restraining order against you.

Unknown: I just need to talk to him, Thomas.

You: He's not with me.

Unknown: Fine, I'll text him myself.

>10:57 AM, June 26th, 2014

Zero: did u talk to my dad

You: I did, yes.

Zero: he jus texterd me

You: Oh, dear. What happened? :(

Zero: he said he wanted to see bass

Zero: not me

Zero: BASS

Zero: i think hses still cligning to the idea that bass is straight LOL

You: Did you indulge him?

Zero: thas like asking if i shot my brother for eating the last kit kat bar

Zero: btw i told that analogy to x and he said i dont have mn y pRIORITIES STRAIGHT

Zero: i dont have ANYTHGN straight

Zero: also my answer is of course

Zero: NO

Zero: i told him to fu

Zero: buzz off and then blocked him

You: That's good. Hopefully he won't bother you again.

Zero: can you tell him nnot 2

You: Of course.

>11:05 AM, June 26th, 2014

You: Zero has asked me to tell you to stop bothering him.

Unknown: He's my son, Thomas, I have a right to be in his life.

You: I suppose you should have thought of that before verbally abusing both him and his younger brother for being gay, Albert.

You blocked Unknown Number

Rock and Roll turned thirteen and Tempo kissed Roll on the lips at her birthday party. The two spent the remainder of the day close to each other or holding hands. The other girls had briefly screamed, but the original screaming had worn off and one of them, a tall girl with blue hair (Thomas was fairly sure her real name was Andrea, but everyone called her 'Splash' for some reason) had approached them and said what they were doing was smart, because boys were gross, she said while looking very pointedly at Rock and Blues, who were playing Mario Kart in the living room. The other girls had agreed, and Thomas realized idly that thirteen-year-old girls were very predisposed to hating other preteen boys. Roll approached Thomas a few hours after everyone but Tempo had gone home, and asked if it was okay that she was dating Tempo. Thomas had clapped her on the back gently and told her not to worry.

Rock got a stomach flu, and while Roll and Blues were at school, Thomas had rested his hand on his youngest son's back as he made ungodly retching noises in the bathroom. After he had finished, the two sat on the couch, Rock wrapped in a blanket and sniffing as he leaned against his dad.

"Dad, do you think I should get a girlfriend? Or... a boyfriend?" Rock had said suddenly, stopping scrubbing the dish he was working on and looking forwards.

"What? Why?" Thomas stopped typing at the laptop that was sitting on the table, and looked over at his son.

"I mean, Blues and X have boyfriends, Roll has a girlfriend... should I get one, too? To fit in?"

"Rock, you shouldn't feel pressured to date just because people you know are. Go at your own pace."

"Even if that pace is more of standing still than anything?"

The words hung in the air.

"Rock?"

"Some girl told me she had a crush on me, once, dad. I said alright and we spent the day walking around and holding hands. I didn't feel any kind of... anything. Is that bad?"

"How long ago was this?"

"A month ago."

"You've broken it off with her, right?"

"We're thirteen. She broke it off at the end of the day."

"Well, I," Thomas started, stroking his chin thoughtfully. "It could be just that one girl you didn't feel anything for. It could be that you won't feel anything for anyone, also."

Rock froze.

"Oh, god. I'm the failure child."

"No, no no! That's not what I'm saying at all!" Thomas half-shouted, waving his hands frantically. "I'm just saying-- if you don't want anyone, then I'll still support you, and that doesn't mean you're the failure child. None of you are the 'failure child,' Rock."

There was silence.

"Are you sure?" Rock said finally, looking at the sudsed-up plate in his hand.

"I'm certain, Rock," Thomas responded, and he stood, walked over, and gave Rock a hug. The hug lasted a rather long time, honestly, mainly because Rock started crying after about fifteen seconds.

Rock and Roll turned fourteen years old, and the birthday party they had was not quite as large as last time, but X, Zero, Bass, and Tempo all showed up for it. Rock and Roll both got a phone, and the first thing that the twins did was add everyone's number to their phone.

>12:34 PM, December 17th, 2015

Unknown: is it working?

You: Yes!

A few hours later, Thomas walked down the stairs to find everyone sitting in the living room by the fireplace, all covered in blankets and asleep. Zero and X were huddled close to each other, bodies tangled. Rock, Roll, and Blues all slept close to each other, Tempo stayed close to Roll, and Bass did the same with Blues.

He glanced outside. It was snowing.

End Notes

kudos and comments are the tomato sauce i put on my pasta. plain pasta is gross. find me at <http://deoxys-official.tumblr.com>

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!