

– And the Father Is... –

The story of a modern day Theseus' quest to find his father

Adela Aldridge was quietly perched at her kitchen sink. The house was clean, and everything within it stood still for a brief period of time. She took a breath, feeling a rare moment of being completely unburdened. A familiar rumbling broke the silence, and out the window, Adela could see a yellow bus zip by. It was only a matter of seconds before the sound of the front door's slam echoed throughout the house.

She could hear from the way her son walked in the door that he'd had a rough day. Adela made her way into the living room where her seventeen year old son was seated on the recliner watching TV. He was slumped to the left, his chin planted firmly into his palm. His right arm was firmly aimed towards the television, the remote secure in a one-handed chokehold. His thumb laid a heavy assault on the channel button. The TV flashed through screen after screen, yet Adela could see by the distant look in the young man's eyes that he wasn't interested in any of it.

"How was your day?" she finally asked, hoping to get an answer from him.

"Fine," he mumbled.

After a short pause, Adela blinked and said, "Well, you seem like something's bothering you, dear. What is it?"

He let out a sigh and placed the remote on the armrest of the recliner before asking sharply, "Why'd you give me such a dumb name?"

"What?" said Adela in surprise. She hadn't expected anything like that to be bothering her son. She inquired with tone so caring that it could only come from a mother, "What's wrong with it?"

"Uh, *Theodore*? Come on, Mom. It's the dorkiest name ever."

Adela leaned on the back of the living room couch and said, "Well, it never seemed to bother you before. Why is it suddenly such a bad name now?"

“Cause it is,” he muttered, reaching for the remote once more.

“Any particular reason?” Adela asked. Her eyes shifted towards her son, giving him a very knowing glance. She had been a mother for seventeen years; she could tell in an instant when there was something her son wasn’t telling her.

Finally, he said, “We had a substitute teacher today, and he did the role call. *Everyone* calls me Theo—except the stupid substitute, who called me by my *real* name. So now, everyone’s been making fun of me all day about my name. It sucks!”

“Theodore is a great name. It means, ‘God’s gift.’”

“God didn’t give nothin’ to me, just a stupid name,” he growled.

Adela frowned and said, “Oh, Theo, it’s what your father wanted.”

“My father? Who cares what he wanted? He never cared about me!” Theo shouted, folding his arms over his chest angrily.

Adela knew the way to ease the teen’s tension. She’d have to tell him. She paused a moment, wondering if it truly was the right time. He seemed mature enough, but more importantly, he seemed determined enough. She would finally set something in action that had been laid out seventeen years ago.

“I need you to go do a chore for me,” she said.

Theo was a little estranged by the random request, but wanting any excuse to escape the situation he was in, he mumbled, “Yeah?”

His mother instructed him, “There is a box in the garage with a lid that I can’t get open; it’s stuck. I need you to do it. It’s the box under our Christmas decorations.”

With a small sigh, Theo turned the TV off and left the room. He had nothing more to say anyway. Adela stood in the living room alone, praying that she made the right decision. Theo immediately located the box in the garage. He’d always been curious about the contents of the unmarked box, but he never bothered with it before. He moved the container of Christmas ornaments before heaving the box atop the drum stool

nearby. Looking at it, he wondered why his mom suddenly needed the box; he didn't have any idea, but he figured the contents inside would give him the answer.

Theo pulled at the dusty, old container's top, his lean arms flexing as he strained. Finally with a crack and a sudden eruption of debris, the lid gave way. Coughing and waving away the dust, he looked inside to find an old amp and a guitar strap. He picked up the strap and looked it over. It was made of what appeared to be alligator skin, judging from the pattern and the feel of it. The strap was certainly a rare item. Theo then inspected the amp to find it to be a high quality little speaker. It was a Fender Bassman from 1960, probably the most high quality vintage amp Theo had ever heard of. He had no idea such a fine music device was in his own garage.

"Where did this stuff come from?" he wondered aloud.

To his surprise, his mother answered, "Your father left those for you."

Theo turned to see his mother standing quietly in the garage doorway. Her arms were neatly folded over her chest, and light from the laundry room illuminated only half of her face. There was a serious look about her—though not a grave one. Theo glanced back down at the amp. He didn't know what to say.

"Dad?" he finally managed to choke out.

"Yeah."

Theo peered back towards his mother and asked, "How did Dad know I would like music?"

"Because he loved music," said Adela simply. "Still does."

"Really? 'Still does?' He plays music?" Theo inquired excitedly.

"No, he's the president of Athen Records. He really loves what he does, just absolutely loves music."

Theo's green eyes opened widely at hearing this. Immediately, he had a thousand questions for his mom. They stayed up late that night talking about how Adela

had met Adrian Aldridge and hit it off. He was a very important business man, a successful man, a *married* man. This, however, did not stop the two from having a brief love affair that led to Adela bearing a child—little Theodore Aldridge. Adrian's biggest dream in life was to have a son who he could make into a talented music superstar and eventually turn his record company over to. He left behind an expensive amp and a custom-made guitar strap for his son. It was a strange story...yet also an extraordinary one.

This was the start of a new dream for Theo. Instantly, he found his mind drifting away into images of himself firing away at furious fretwork in the presence of his father. He could just hear the amp's electrifying noise ringing in his ears and the sound of his father's voice praising him. He knew he had to make it happen.

Theo's time quickly became consumed by guitar practice. Every weekend, he visited various entertainment spots around the city with his band doing performances. People in the local area began to know their name. This notoriety soon spread further and further until finally Theo's band received an invitation to an event that would be their break into the big leagues. They were to open for the internationally renowned band Finding Marie. This was an especially important event for Theo. Finding Marie had a record deal with Athen Records—the company his father was president of. This would be a link to his father. Theo was determined to use this as a way to finally take a step closer to him.

The location was at an arena downtown. The place was huge and filled with people. Every seat held a person, even the balcony seats up above. From the stage, they were just distant faces though. When Theo went on stage with his band, he looked over the crowd, wondering if possibly his father was perhaps amongst it. The lights flashed on them, and they began playing. The adrenaline in Theo's body gave his fingers the ability to fly over the strings of his guitar and play like mad.

After their set's very last cymbal crash, the lights faded. The crowd cheered, and Theo smiled. He felt a warm, heavy sense of relief wash over him. The band had made it through their entire show. Everything went well. He was so proud, but he had to keep his elation inside—at least until they were off stage. Just as he started to turn around, the lights unexpectedly turned back on. A dark fear immediately froze Theo in his tracks. Had he done something wrong? What was going on? He turned around to find a man in a suit standing on the stage, microphone in hand.

He said, gesturing towards Theo, "My name is Adrian Aldridge, president of Athen records, the very company responsible for Finding Marie's concert tonight. I would like to personally introduce everyone to the special young guitarist of this talented group...my son...Theodore Aldridge."

Theo's eyes widened as he stared at the man. It was his father. He was standing right there before him. Before Theo even had time to assess the situation, Percival Neptune Franklin, the beastly lead guitarist for Finding Marie, stormed onto the stage. He didn't have a pleasant look on his face, and Theo immediately became worried. He looked back at his bandmates who were all standing still, each with a similar shocked and motionless expression on his face.

Percival ripped the microphone from Adrian's hand and shouted to the crowd as he pointed to Adrian, "This man is lying! I am the father of Theodore Aldridge!"

"What is this—some kind of joke?" Adrian yelled, his voice clearly audible despite the lack of microphone.

"No," Percival fired back, "this boy *is* my son."

Adrian glared at the guitarist as he stated definitively, "There's only one way to settle this..."

“Welcome to *Maury*, everyone,” greeted Maury Povich. “Today’s story is one that has been talked about in music news all around the country. Who *is* the father of Theodore Aldridge, the lead guitarist of his band, Left-Handed Heroes? Well, we are fortunate enough to have him, his mother, and *both* of the alleged fathers here tonight.”

Here, the host paused as the studio audience cheered. Then, he continued on, detailing the whole story about the first affair between Adela and Adrian. The next thing discussed was her second affair with singer, guitarist, and guitar creator Percival Neptune Franklin, who was just recently given the prestigious title of *Rolling Stones’* God of Rock for the first decade of the twenty-first century. Maury interviewed each member of the family about the predicament, and both fathers insisted that Theo was his child and not the other’s. Adela didn’t have any clue who it could be, and Theo just had no idea what to make of *any* of it. The answer would be found, though, in a paternity test.

Later in the episode, Maury was silent as he looked over the report from the test with a serious face. The dramatic pauses always drew the audience in. However, he was—for the first time in all the years of his long-running talk show—utterly surprised by the results. The paternity test stated that both Adrian Aldridge *and* Percival Franklin were the father—well, *fathers*. Maury curiously looked up at the show’s producer, who was standing nearby just out of the range of the cameras. The producer simply nodded for him to continue. It was certainly strange, but Maury had to continue on with the show.

“The paternity test shows that *both* Adrian and Percival are the fathers of Theodore Aldridge,” he stated.

Eyes opened widely throughout the entire studio. The audience broke into excited whispering as Theo looked from his mother, to his father, and then to his other father. He wasn’t sure how to take the news. He had two fathers. Luckily for him, both were very powerful and well known figures in the music industry. He knew he could use

that fact to his advantage. He'd get all kinds of publicity for it, and any record deal or guitar deal he wanted was his. This opened up a new world of possibilities for Theo.

After a commercial break, Maury asked, "What do you plan on doing now that you know the truth, Theo?"

"Well," said Theo with a smile, "I plan on going into a nationally televised battle of the bands competition against a death metal band called Raging Bulls next week with both my dads watching me!"

"We wish you the best of luck, Theo," said Maury. "Everyone be sure to catch the live taping of this event on Friday night at 9:30 PM EST—10:30 CST. That's all for today's episode. Good bye, everyone."

Epilogue

Left-Handed Heroes was victorious over Raging Bulls in the battle of the bands. Raging Bulls was reportedly “so humiliated by defeat” that they never played any death metal ever again. Theo and his band went on to become very well known, with Theo being at the center of attention most of the time. He married the Raging Bulls’ music video actress, Adrianna Menes. This marriage did not last long, however. He later married Adrianna’s sister Faye Lynn Menes, an athletic trainer.

Since the news of Adrian Aldridge’s affair went public on Maury, he divorced his wife, Madeline Jackson-Aldridge. The son that former actress Madeline had with Adrian was in the music industry. However, he never rose to the popularity that Theo did, despite his best attempts and the influence of his mother. Madeline, at one point, attempted to ruin Theo’s career by creating a false rumor to ruin his reputation. After debunking this unkind rumor and discovering her as the source of it, both she and her son were cast out of the entertainment business.

After creating a series of very small, light guitars of his own design, called the Minotars, Theo took his father’s place as president of Athen Records. He was a very successful man who made a lot of good record deals. His band’s music stayed at the top of the charts until being thrown off of them by a newer band called Scyros Kings. He is still working in the industry, though no longer playing music. He does not plan to retire any time soon.