Grimdark Axolotl TF

The world Axel lived in was awful, to put things lightly. Axel had grown up in a city where crime and corruption were rampant, and one could barely walk an inch without being mugged or at least assaulted in some way. Axel had to grow up quickly and learn how to survive even quicker.

Somehow, Axel had managed to survive in this hellhole. He had ran away from his home when he was a teenager and joined up with a thieves gang. It was a comfortable or safe life, not in the slightest. But at least it was a life nonetheless.

And as Axel stood in the empty remains of the raided base he and his fellows used to hide in, staring into his reflection in a pool of dirty water…he couldn’t help but contemplate his existence up to this point.

Axel stared at his scarred, bald face, examined his rugged, worn body. Previously, he never had much time or reason to ponder anything…but now, with his gang mostly imprisoned and the base destroyed, Axel had plenty of time to himself…whether he liked it or not.

Axel never really hated how he looked, but he didn’t particularly like his appearance either. He looked like what any old peasant would expect a dirty thief to look like. Axel grunted and looked away. He hated thinking, thinking just made one open to attacks…yet how he wished he could just find somewhere truly safe and just…keep thinking.

But no matter how much he wanted to change his circumstances, Axel couldn’t. He knew even since his early childhood that the world was too far gone, the city was too corrupted to ever allow good people into power. It was partially the reason why Axel joined the lawbreakers in the first place. If you can’t beat them, join them, after all. Better than being mugged and left to die in the middle of a sewage puddle behind a leaky shack.

Speaking of…it was about time that Axel headed back to his own. It was getting late, and it was dangerous to be out at night. Granted it was also dangerous to be at home at night, but it was better than nothing.

Axel’s heavy leather boots clunked against the cracked, dirty cobblestone streets as he walked, his eyes darting every-which-way to scope out for potential danger. Axel never spotted any…but he spotted things that one could consider much worse.

A dirty corpse facedown in a puddle of what Axel could only hope was mud…a single mother and her daughter clamored against a rusted wall covered in a moth-eaten blanket…and more…

Axel tried to ignore such things. He knew that empathy was a folly that would only get oneself killed…yet even still he couldn’t stop himself from wishing that things were different. Wishing that he could do something to help those around him.

And those feelings were only intensified when Axel came upon the town square. He couldn’t help but direct his eyes towards the massive statue in the middle…a tarnished, crumbling statue of the hero known as Llewellyn. It was covered in bodily fluids, moss, and cracks. It was missing its entire head, as well as an arm, and was painted with several tags from different coalitions.

Llewellyn was someone who Axel had always aspired to be like before his life of crime. Llewellyn was supposedly an ancient hero who had lived through a time of great corruption like the one Axel lived in. As the legend stated, Llewellyn had grown sick of the endless evil and took matters into his own hands. Supposedly he slew each leader of each town, as well as everyone who followed them before enstating new ones whom he dubbed to be true and just. And apparently it worked for many years before Llwellyn suddenly vanished, and the corruption slowly but surely returned.

Many hoped that Llwellyn will return from wherever he came and right the wrongs of the world like he did so long ago…an equal amount of the population doubted his existence entirely, and believed that he was made up to keep the people hopeful and stupid.

Axel himself didn’t know where he stood on the matter and nary had the time to figure it out. So he merely…never did.

“…49 years…It baffles me how I have survived this long…” Axel mumbled to himself. He sighed and began to walk again…when suddenly a voice spoke to him.

“Such a nice statue, is it not?” A wizened, feminine voice spoke. Axel really couldn’t be bothered to talk to whoever this was, so he just didn’t.

“A shame what has happened to it. I imagine it was truly beautiful years ago.” The voice spoke again. Axel really didn’t get why people just couldn’t take any hints.

“You know, it’s quite rude to ignore an elder when they are speaking to you, hooligan.” The woman spoke again, seemingly having followed Axel.

Axel growled, narrowed his eyes, and turned around to face the woman. She was hunched over, dressed in a faded black dress. Her skin was stretched, warty, and pale, and her hair was white and wispy.

“Oh, my apologies.” Axel began through gritted teeth. “Allow me to adjust my manners. I do not wish to speak with you, wench. Begone from me or I shall toss you into one of the puddles around the statue.”

Axel turned around to try and leave again, but the hag spoke up again.

“UGH! How disgustingly rude! Someone ought to teach you true manners!”

Axel growled again and whipped back around threateningly, only to suddenly be frozen in place.

The Hag had begun emitting a light-blue laser from her finger, which paralyzed Axel upon contact. The man’s heart instantly began beating like a drum as he tried to resist. Every nerve in his body firing on overtime as he tried to break free from The Hag’s control.

“Hrrghh…I should detach your head from your shoulders for your rudeness…” The Hag grunted as she approached Axel, who had begun sweating profusely.

“…But I shall not. As I said, someone like you needs a serious attitude adjustment…and I know just the thing.” The Hag said before snapping his fingers.

Within an instant, Axel was thrown forward, and the world around him devolved into an overstimulating mass of colors which flew by him. Axel unwittingly screamed in horror as he flew through whatever the hell this was. All the bright colors quickly made his eyes hurt, and the velocity at which he was moving made his head follow suit.

But mercifully…Axel would start to slow down, and eventually he would be left floating in whatever kind of void or pocket dimension this was…

At that moment, Axel found that he was able to speak and move freely again. Axel subsequently used this freedom to whip all around, brandishing his daggers and growling threats at the hag.

“WENCH! HAG! WHERE HAVE YOU TRAPPED ME?! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?! I SWEAR BY LLELLWYN’S MYTHRIL SWORD, WHEN I GET MY HANDS ON YOU I’LL-“

Axel was suddenly overcome by a wave of oddly relaxing energy, causing his fingers to loosen the grip on the dagger, allowing it to fall into the void below.

“Wh…what? I…I feel…good?” It was as if any and all anger in Axel’s being had been washed away by a warm, clean river.

“This….magic…what is…?”

And speaking of a warm, clean river…something very odd began to happen. Any dirt and grime present on Axel’s body began to vanish like it was being cleaned away by an invisible sponge. That may now have been a very remarkable effect, but what happened next surely would be.

For after Axel had been anomalously cleaned up, an itchy feeling began, localized mostly in his forearms.

“Nrgh…What the h-ELL?!” Scales were growing out of Axel’s skin, smooth, bright-turquoise scales. It wouldn’t be long before the scales would start to spread their reach on his arms. Axel, of course, began panicking.

‘No-! NONO! This can’t be-! Stop!” Axel started feverishly trying to scratch at the scales with his fingernails. He internally kicked himself for dropping his dagger a few moments ago, such a tool would make stopping this so much easier.

But no matter how much Axel scratched, the scales persisted, and soon, his arms would be fully scaly. Before Axel even had time to process it, his hands would start to change next.

His fingers grew a little bit, his fingernails fusing with his fingertips and ceasing to exist entirely. To compensate, however, his fingertips sharpened into slightly-sharp claws.

“My hands-! My arms-! What is happening to me?!” Axel cried in horror. But sadly for him, yet another drastic change was about to unfold.

In the next moment, both of his gloves broke away with a startling ***Snap!*** And thin-yet-tough webbing began to grow out of the space between his fingers, stopping at his knuckles.

Axel couldn’t even form words at this point, he could only pant and huff in anxiety as he watched his body change.

More and more of the man’s skin began to be replaced by the scales, and as the growth of the scales continued, something arguably odder began to occur.

It was like time itself began to reverse on Axel’s body, all of his scars and blemishes faded, and any wrinkles he had smoothed over as his skin seemed to tighten itself over his body.

“H-Huh-? A-Am I getting…Younger?” Axel sputtered. And as he spoke, Axel realized that his very voice had changed. It lost a great deal of deepness and gruffness, becoming distinctly youthful…it reminded Axel of how his voice sounded when he was 20 years old…in fact, it was exactly how he sounded at that age.

“I…I AM…” Axel was having mixed feelings about all of this. On the one hand, this was all completely non-consensual, but on the other hand, this all didn’t feel *bad*…just what the hell was that hag planning for him?

And before Axel could think on this further, the coat of scales had reached his head and fully covered it all up. Within an instant, Axel’s ears and nose deteriorated into mere holes for smelling and hearing. Right after, Axel’s face started to push outwards, forming a short, but wide muzzle. Axel momentarily traced it with his hands before being distracted by a series of pushing sensations in the sides of his head.

It wouldn’t last long, though, for six large, feathery gills started sprouting outwards, and once they were fully grown, they wiggled around absentmindedly as if savoring their freedom.

Soon enough, the nerves in the gills would be fully formed, and Axel would flick them around on his own.

“I…I have…gills now…” He murmured breathlessly.

Another wave of energy hit Axel, though this one wasn’t as nice as the last. In fact, it was quite uncomfortable, for this one began to alter his figure entirely.

Axel groaned and squirmed in discomfort as his muscle mass rearranged. His arms and legs grew thicker with muscle while his frame compacted slightly. His belly also began to grow somewhat to make up for the muscle mass that moved elsewhere, leaving Axel with a sizeable, heavyset gut.

And yet more restructuring would occur, this time in Axel’s feet. On each foot, two of his toes would shrink down and become all but useless as the rest of his feet began to stretch. His toes went through the same changes his fingers did, complete with webbing between them. His newly grown, amphibian feet momentarily pushed against the walls of Axel’s boots before they suddenly burst away unprompted, startling the former-human again.

But it still wasn’t done, as Axel’s spine began to ache and spasm. Axel could do naught but groan and whimper at this point. He could barely even process most of the changes that had happened to him thus far, he just wanted this to be over.

Some relief would come when a long, scaly tail erupted from Axel’s spine, rocketing through his pants as well. Once it was fully grown, the tail grew a set of gills similar to the ones on Axel’s head.

It was over, finally. But before Axel would have a chance to process his new body, he would once again be sent flying through the void at a speed which he could barely even comprehend. Axel had half a mind to think his new gills would be torn from his head with how fast he was being flung.

It felt like hours, but after a while of speeding through the air…Axel suddenly found himself laying in a bed in a small, wooden room.

Axel had to simply lay still for a few moments while his brain caught up to everything that happened…luckily for him, the bed he’d found himself in was quite comfortable…more comfortable than any bed he’d ever laid in. He was tempted to just fall asleep in it.

…But no, he had more important things to worry about right now.

Axel through the covers off of his body and stood up. He momentarily winced at the feeling of his feet touching the floor, but he quickly recovered.

“Llwellyn’s sword…” Axel mused as he examined his new body. He ran his hands all across his scales, traced his muzzle and gills, and even held his tail in his hands for a moment. Right after that, he realized his outfit had changed, too. Instead of the brutish and malevolent armor of thieves he was dressed in previously, he now wore a set of comfortable, aquamarine pajamas.

“…Where…where am I…?” Axel’s eyes wandered all around the room. It was small but cozy, featuring the bed he found himself in, a bedside table, and a wardrobe across it. Axel’s eyes also were drawn to a window with the curtains drawn over it. Instinctively, Axel walked over to it and drew back the curtains…and within an instant his breath was taken away.

Axel was met with a bright, beautiful green field outside of the window, which sat beneath a clear blue sky. It was the first time in Axel’s life he’d ever seen such a thing…it completely took his breath away.

“My…my lord…” Axel said, mesmerized. But a sudden knock on the door would snap him out of his reverie.

“Oi, you awake in there, Axel? If you are, come on down to the dining room, wouldn’t want to be late to start work on your first day!” The voice of…someone said.

Axel wasn’t sure what he was supposed to say, who that person was, or where he even was…

“…I guess I shall just…follow along for now.”

Axel knew he should probably be more nervous right now, but he had experienced much more stressful things in his past life…so this was nothing compared to that.

Axel took a deep breath and opened the door, being met with another humanoid axolotl, just like him. That briefly caught Axel off-guard, but he figured that such a sight wouldn’t be out of place in wherever the hell this was.

“Ah good! You’re awake. Come on down and eat breakfast, you’ll get to meet the rest of the farmhands while you’re down there!” The axolotl chirped before walking away.

Axel nodded tentatively and followed along.

The house that Axel walked through was very nice. It was no mansion or castle, but it was far preferable to the filthy slums Axel had known previously…Had he gone back in time? Had he gone to the future? Was he even in the same world anymore?

Axel was led to a wide, homely dining room. There were about a dozen other farmhands sitting around a long, rectangular table, and as one could expect, they were all axolotls.

Axel sat down at a random unoccupied seat where a bright-green axolotl almost immediately started up a conversation with him.

“Oh howdy! You must be the new guy! I’m Phineas, pleased to meetcha!” The axolotl said. Axel had to take a moment to process that, for he was not at all used to any sort of positive or cordial interaction from anyone.

“Um, yes. Yes I am.” Axel said, trying to play along.

“Very good, very good! I hope you’ll enjoy your time on this farm! We’re rather tight-knit here already, but I’m sure you’ll fit right in!” Phineas said, patting Axel on the shoulder reassuringly, which caused him to tense up a bit.

“Oh uh, sorry about that.” Phineas said, retracting his head.

“Um, thank you. I shall surely give it my all.”

The rest of the morning was pretty uneventful. After breakfast, Axel was directed to change into a set of work-overalls, then followed Phineas to a river on the grounds of the farm where they tended to a forest of kelp that grew in it.

The work was simple, and outside of the directions that Phineas gave at the beginning of the job, the two didn’t talk very much. This allowed Axel to reflect on the recent events…

He thought about his previous life, and how amoral and miserable it was…how miserable that world itself was…he thought about the hag…why did she do this? Why would she send him somewhere that seemed better than his previous home for being rude to her? Hell, why didn’t she send herself here?

But either way…it seemed like Axel had an entire new chance at life. That transformation he’d gone through had apparently de-aged him by 29 years, and he’d been placed somewhere completely disconnected from where he used to live… he could leave that old life behind, start anew. Here, Axel could discover himself. He didn’t have to hurt others to survive, he didn’t have to commit crimes. He could be his own, empathetic self.

And as Axel swam through the pristine, blue waters of this river with Phineas…swimming from kelp stalk to kelp stalk…a thought crossed Axel’s mind.

(Perhaps I shall run into that hag again one day…then I will be able to thank her properly.”