

# Allur Fedder-Elsen

## Afton Rath

3 years after the war ended, Caradaya, the second-largest moon of Oracif (the \_\_\_\_ largest planet of Rízaly), was left derelict.

By means of looks, population, and politics, the largest moon, Joinah, received all the attention through money, supplies, and a workforce to repair all damages done.

On Caradaya, the air was dark.

On Caradaya, the water tasted of metal.

On Caradaya, your skin would burn, and collect a layer of fine debris that seeped into your blood.

Allur Fedder, a farmhand, adopted by a family- the Elsens- provided enough to keep Allur alive for the last two years.

The Fedders, on the other hand, kept Allur hanging to life from birth.

This is how they got here.

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Outskirts of Ghide, \_\_\_\_, Caradaya, 2232

In the first two weeks of the war, Allur awoke to the floor rumbling, the windows shattered, and a ringing in their ears. A blue light shone through the window, a light like no other. A repeated sound, that of a backwards explosion, was felt through Allur's frail heart. When they stood up, a subtle pain was felt in their left leg, and seconds later, it gave out. They hobbled towards the window, finding it shattered, with glass shards spread across the wall. Allur looked out the window, seeing that their barn, which contained goat-like creatures, was gone. Planks of wood were thrown into surrounding buildings, sticking into walls like darts. The smoldering remains from a crater, that larger than the barn that was once in its stead, were scattered with black corpses of the goats. Many missed limbs, many were splayed out across the ground. But something stood out on the ground, something humanoid.

Allur's heart, already beating hard- trying to get blood through their starved body- was stabbed with a sharp pain.

Instinct told them to rush out their door, through the hallway, which was a sharp right immediately out the door. Their leg started pulsing with pain, Allur themselves surprised it was even still functional. Allur rushed through the kitchen, still smelling of pumpkin seeds and vinegar from dinner hours earlier. Reaching the front door, they turned the unlocked handle. Running- and limping- Allur felt the ground hot against their bare feet. This was a small ranch the

Fedders had bought only months earlier, already torn to shreds from an invasion the moon was still processing. Allur dodged burning pieces of burnt organic material and splintered wooden boards. Despite this, Allur's feet began to fill with sharp wood pieces, several centimeters deep. A smell filled Allur's senses, and a glorious smell at that. The burnt wood, emitting a sweet scent that took Allur back to when they lived in the suburbs- a backyard barbecue. Allur finally reached the crater, navigating to the area where they saw the burnt figure. And then they saw it, *it* being their father.

The details of the sight, too hard to bear, Allur looked away. They took ten or so steps backwards, enough to get out of the crater, before they tripped upon the fallen barn door. The adrenaline had left their body, their leg had reminded itself it was filled with shards of glass. Allur lay numb.

*Why, why am I filled with relief?* They questioned themselves.

*Why do I not feel sad for my father's death? Curse him for what he did to me, curse him for what he did to our family.*

Allur recalled what had happened that led to the barn being destroyed. The blue light wasn't a creation of the people of Oracif, and Aktume hadn't been a threat in many, many years.

“The gods must have struck him down for his sins.”  
Allur coped out loud, fully knowing they did not believe in such an idea.

The same reversed explosion reverberated through their head, heat was felt throughout their body, with light penetrating their shut eyes.

The ground finally shook.

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Allur slowly woke up in a bed that was not their own, in a realm that was not their own. This realm was older. Allur scanned their blurred eyes across the room. Floral wallpaper, ripped in the corners, complemented by the yellow stain of the drywall behind. A landline phone attached to the wall near the door, something Allur hadn't seen in 10 years or so. An antique mirror covered a majority of the wall in front of the queen bed Allur lay in. They gazed at their face, face and body they did not fancy one bit. Blemished brown skin, curly black hair with silver streaks, not typical for a 16-year-old. Dark bags sat under their sunken blue eyes that stood out— not matching anything else on their body.

Allur raised their arms to stretch. Their right hand, covered in a glove, fell limp with no control. Allur

reached their functioning left hand to pull the glove, slowly revealing mechanical fingers. They weren't formed like the flesh-covered hands of Allur's human-like species, but they were the bones' basic shape. The bones were instead thin metal bars, and the three joints were cubes. The metal was not shiny, but a dull gray matte.

Allur sat up and looked at nothing. Gazing into the distance, as if waiting for something.

A woman, possibly in her 40s, walked into the room after 15 minutes, shocked to see Allur's focused peer into her eyes. She observed nothing behind the bright blue eyes.

The woman was Nessa Elsen, a silver blonde, tall, and unblemished lady. A famous farm owner in the region—her family worked everyday—milking their goat-like creatures(a bigger species than the Fedders had) and selling cheese, ice cream, and other dairy products of the sorts to the surrounding cities.

The company was simply named Elsen Farms.

Allur wasn't prepared to question. Instead, they quickly followed the hand gestures of Nessa, bringing them out of the hallway. A savory smell of fried meat—possibly bacon—was immediately sensed by Allur's hungry stomach.

Walking down the stairs was difficult. They noticed a cast tightly wrapped around their skinny left leg, hidden by their pants.

Allur limped to sit at an oval, wooden table. Looking to their right, they saw a classic kitchen. All appliances bore a turquoise color with smooth, curved sides. Damon Elsen, a balding, tanned, and friendly-looking man, tended to his stove. He briefly looked over their shoulder to view the home's new resident.

"Nice to have another man around the farm *heheh*."

Allur cringed at the words.

"Although you won't be getting to work until your leg is all better. What's your name, lad?"

"A- Allur," they mumbled, not talking in the last week or so, they were unconscious.

Nessa sat down at the opposite side of the table.

"A Fedder, eh?" She began. "I've seen your mother at her stand in the market. I don't know if she survived the explosion, but I have hope."

"She better be dead." Allur sharply retorted, as all their timidity quickly left their mind.

Nessa's mouth slightly fell agape, blankly staring at Allur's hanging head.

Damon stared down, made a slightly approving grunt, then turned his attention back to stirring something in a pan.

"It was that bad then?" Nessa said in a motherly tone and rested her hand on the table.

"Look at me, skinny, crippled, scarred. We had food, and I was given little. You'd think I'd have some muscle from the 12 hours of labor per day, huh? *Heheheh*, not me."

They spoke manically towards the end.

Allur never spoke up, especially to their family of judgment, telling these farmers their years of torture were a relief.

"Well, uh- food is almost ready, dear, and don't listen to Damon, we won't be making you do any work for a while."

The ground shook momentarily.

"Who's attacking?" Allur, still ignorant of all the news, questioned.

"People from another galaxy, lad," Damon said, not turning his head away from the eggs he was scrambling.

"Don't know why they chose us, Equino has troops swarming overhead. The invaders shot down some giant ship over the North, and it killed some three thousand people."

"Damon..." Nessa signalling for him to stop with the depressing news.

"Do I still need a doctor for my leg?" Allur wondered out loud.

"Only one more thing to do with it left, lad." Damon raised his arm and did a scissors motion with his pointer and middle fingers.

"The pork is ready if you want to get him a plate, Nessa."

"T-them," Allur, losing all confidence, feebly mumbled.

"Hmm?" Damon inquired.

"It's them, not him."

"Hmph," Damon gazed to his right discerningly.

"Well if that's the case... you're still going to be called lad, can't keep me from that habit," Damon chuckled.

"Here you go, dear," Nessa said, setting down the plate of fried pork in front of Allur.

"I'll get you the eggs soon. Oh, and..." She returned to the kitchen and picked a fork and knife from a drawer.

"Here."

Allur, starving, had already started eating. They had refused to use silverware since an incident when they were young, so it didn't matter anyway.

Allur, suddenly realizing, had been perfectly using their mechanical hand.

*"I didn't realize it'd be this easy..."* Allur thought before freezing up awkwardly.

"Is-is it ok to eat with this?" Allur raised their greasy right hand, looking at Nessa.

"Yes, I believe so, right Damon?"

"Yup, no need to wash either!"

The ground shook again, this time, however, it was from someone rushing down the stairs. A boy, possibly Allur's age, tripped on the final step, and caught themselves on a wall.

"Ah, so he woke up!" the boy cheered, staring at Allur. He sounded genuinely excited, but a snarky tone lingered underneath.

"They," Nessa said with food in her mouth.

"Oh, uh..." he awkwardly responded and walked towards the table. He sat down in the chair to the left of Allur.

"This is Oliver, about the same age as you," Nessa informed Allur, this time swallowing first.

"Sixteen," Oliver said.

"S- same," Allur felt timid again. Oliver had the same long black hair, same dark brown eyes, and same lip shape as their older brother. A grim reminder of a lifelong tormenter.

"I'm January..." Allur answered the unsaid question they anticipated Oliver to ask.

"December," Oliver said with a *somehow* sorrowful mug.

Damon walked over to the table with the pan of eggs and courteously poured Allur some.

"That enough, lad?"

"Yes, sir. And uh, I need some water."

“How ‘bout apple juice?”

“That works, sir.”

Allur switched to formality after realizing the unmannerly nature of the trauma talk from earlier.

“Is the Internet still out?” Oliver asked, arms crossed against the table.

“Yup,” Damon answered, setting down a fancy glass of apple juice next to Allur.

“Service?”

“Yup, *but* dial-up is still available because I know how much you love using that ancient computer.” Damon laughed.

“The thing is *literally* hundreds of years old, I have no clue how it still works!” Oliver yelled jokingly.

“I got the news on it, still got some purpose, eh lad?”

Oliver was unmoved.

Allur found eating eggs was much more enjoyable with a metal hand. Although they could tell the slight weight change when they picked something up, the slimy feeling

wasn't felt. This allowed them to scoop up the eggs with the palm of their hand without the appetite-turn-off from the unsavory texture.

"I'm jealous of the hand," Oliver said. "Mum won't let me get one."

"Evolution didn't happen for you to become a cyborg by choice, Oliver!" Nessa lectured the insistent boy.

"Still..." Oliver put their head sideways into their crossed arms.

Anxiety pumped throughout Allur during the last 5 minutes of the conversation. Their right leg was restless, tapping and shaking up and down endlessly. But it felt so much easier than any meal with the Fedders.

"You gonna eat anything, Ollie?" Nessa asked.

"I'm alright, had a midnight snack earlier, explosions kept me up."

"W-why do the explosions sound like that?" Allur asked, usually accustomed to the sound of fireworks at the yearly harvest festival.

“No one knows yet,” Damon answered. “Well, I'm sure some geniuses up in Firon are figuring out why, unless they've already been bombed themselves.”

Allur wondered about Ghide, the town the Fedders and Elsens sold in. Were the explosions coming from there? Did the aliens attacking not care about killing civilians?

Allur had finished all their food and drink, but stuck around at the table to listen to the conversations between the near-nuclear family. Nessa constantly tried to drag Allur into the constant dialogue, but their mood had swung completely to the depressed side.

Though humored by the conversation, Allur was still coming to terms with where they were. Everything in the house seemed so old, yet the residents felt so modern. Not to mention the lack of information to understand what the hell is going on with them, and how they've even been drawn into this situation.

Allur, overwhelmed, drew attention to themselves by beginning to weep.

“Aww, come here, dear,” Nessa comforted, standing up and walking to Allur while Damon placed an arm on Allur's shoulder.

Oliver looked down, picking at his nails, occasionally glancing over to Allur, whose face was covered by their hands, though the mechanical one didn't hide much.

Nessa helped Allur out of their chair and held their left hand, guiding them back upstairs.

Limping to the room they woke from, Allur hastily pushed the door open and stumbled onto the bed.

"I'm sorry for not giving you enough attention, dear. I was hesitant about how much to share, especially with Ollie there."

"It- it's f-fine... It's not your fault, I'm just..."

"I know, dear. We were given your medical files when we uh... adopted you."

Allur found repose in the mention of adoption.

Nessa sat down next to Allur. "I'm terribly sorry about the... "them" thing, I didn't see anything about it in the files."

"It's- it's fine... it's- it's selfish of me anyway to make people deal with that."

"No, no dear, I know folks around here, even Damon, aren't accustomed to that, but I will respect anything my child identifies as."

"You're- you're- already better than my mother..." Allur started bawling.

The ground shook hard.

"Allur, dear, what do you need right now?"

"I need to be alone... and I need water."

"I can give you the former, but you're going to have to have something else, the water isn't safe right now. Luckily, we have our own produce and livestock. Do you want apple juice or milk?"

"M-milk... c-can you warm it up too?"

"Of course, dear."

Nessa opened her arms for a potential hug, and Allur, not feeling comfortable with physical touch in the last 10 years, sat up and squeezed their new mother tight.