
Character Biography

Curufin

By Dawn Felagund

Curufin is the fifth son of Fëanor in *The Silmarillion* and described as being the most like his father, both in skills, mood, and appearance. Perhaps because of the burden of such a legacy, Curufin exemplifies the most guileful and wicked of the brothers both in the published material and in the early drafts. Yet even he is not without a hint of goodwill.

Prior to the Battle of Sudden Flame, Curufin kept the realm of Himlad with his brother Celegorm, and his role in the events of *The Silmarillion* is minimal. However, after being displaced from Himlad, Celegorm and Curufin fled to their cousin's hidden realm of Nargothrond, and Curufin's actions began to significantly shape the history of the Noldor.

When Beren came to Nargothrond to ask Finrod's help in securing a Silmaril, Curufin spoke after his brother Celegorm and convinced Finrod's people that aiding their king would bring death and ruin to the realm. His influence was so strong that the people of Nargothrond forsook Finrod and refused to come openly to war until the days of Túrin.

The rebellion of the people of Nargothrond against Finrod worked well for the purposes of Curufin and Celegorm, for they sought to usurp his place in Nargothrond and gather as much power as they could beneath themselves. While hunting in the wild, Celegorm's hound Huan found Lúthien, and the brothers took her to Nargothrond and held her captive there, intending to send notice to Thingol that Celegorm would marry her, thus bringing not only the power of Nargothrond but also Doriath into their hands.

But Huan betrayed them and aided Lúthien in her escape, and word came to the people of Nargothrond of the brothers' treachery, first against Finrod and then Lúthien. Orodreth cast Celegorm and Curufin forth from Nargothrond, and their deeds made Nargothrond forever an enemy of the House of Fëanor. At this time also, they were deserted by their people, including Celebrimbor, the son of Curufin, through whom the extraordinary skill of the House of Fëanor would survive for more than an age and whose talents would connect the Fëanorians to the events at the end of the Third Age.

As Celegorm and Curufin rode east to their brother Maedhros in Himring, they found Beren and Lúthien, and Curufin lifted Lúthien onto his horse. But making a great leap, Beren pulled Curufin from this horse and to the ground, and Curufin was almost choked to death. Celegorm saved his brother, and Lúthien would not permit Beren to slay Curufin. Instead, Beren stripped Curufin of his weapons and gear, including the Dwarven knife Angrist that he would later use to cut the Silmaril from Morgoth's iron crown, and took his horse. Shamed by his defeat, Curufin shot Celegorm's bow twice as he rode away astride Celegorm's horse. Both times, he aimed for Lúthien, but the first arrow was caught by Huan and the second hit Beren as he leaped to defend his beloved.

There is little more to the tale of Curufin. With his brother Celegorm, he swore to slay Thingol and rode off with his brothers to the second kinslaying in Doriath, where he met his end. However, by his actions, he further alienated the House of Fëanor in their dealings with others of the people of Middle-earth. While the published *Silmarillion* credits only Orodreth's refusal to join the Union of Maedhros to the deeds of Maedhros's brothers Celegorm and Curufin, earlier drafts state also that Thingol of Doriath and Edain from the House of Haleth also refused the summons because of Celegorm and Curufin's treatment of Beren and Lúthien.

Curufin's legacy, however, would live on in the age to come through his son Celebrimbor. Alone of the Fëanorians, Curufin is noted as having fathered a child, and Celebrimbor inherited the talents of his father and grandfather. In the Second Age, Celebrimbor would aid Sauron in the forging of the Rings of Power, a mistake that would cost him his life ... but would eventually help to free the people of Middle-earth from Sauron's thralldom.

The evolution of Curufin's story is an interesting one, and his varying roles throughout the development of *The Silmarillion* suggest that J.R.R. Tolkien cast him early on as the most villainous of the Fëanorians. In the *Lay of Leithian* from *The Lays of Beleriand*, a marginal note goes so far as to say that "[i]t is Curufin who put evil into Celegorm's heart," and he is explicitly portrayed as the more ambitious and scheming of the brothers.

In the earliest versions of the Nargothrond story, Finrod Felagund was not yet present as a character, and it was Celegorm and Curufin--alongside Orodreth--who founded Nargothrond. With Felagund's arrival in the story, these three characters all underwent a necessary shift to redefine their roles in the Nargothrond story, and Curufin--alongside Celegorm--became the crafty and ambitious "overpowerful guest" of Felagund. An interesting element that further shaped the development of this story was the friendship of the youngest sons of Finarfin--Orodreth, Angrod, and Aegnor--with Celegorm and Curufin. When Finrod Felagund stepped into his role as the king of Nargothrond, Celegorm and Curufin were motivated following their defeat at the Battle of Sudden Flame to seek their old friend Orodreth. In early drafts of this particular version, they sought him on Tol Sirion and, later, went with him to Nargothrond. As the story evolved further, they sought him in *Nargothrond*, in a realm ruled by Felagund, and the published version of the story begins to take shape. (The many variations of the Nargothrond story can be found in *The History of Middle-earth*, Volumes 3, 4, and 5.) When the friendship between the sons of Finarfin and the sons of Fëanor was removed from the story in the *Annals of Aman* (Volume 10), Celegorm and Curufin are said to have saved Orodreth's life when Sauron overtook Tol Sirion; in gratitude, therefore, they were accepted into Nargothrond.

Given Curufin's dark history, it is difficult to fathom how he is a rewarding character to explore creatively. However, even J.R.R. Tolkien expressed awareness that his portrayal of Curufin was rather flat and one-sided. In the *Maeglin* section of Volume 11, a note from Tolkien says, "The meeting between Eöl and Curufin ... is good, since it shows (as is desirable) Curufin, too often the villain (especially in the Tale of Tinúviel), in a better and more honourable light." The full story that Tolkien references did not make it into the published *Silmarillion*. In this longer version of the published events, Celegorm and Curufin aid Aredhel and Maeglin in their flight to Doriath by lending horses and attempt to waylay Eöl. However, the encounter between Curufin and Eöl where Curufin expresses his displeasure with Eöl's pursuit but refuses to harm him (though, as Tolkien pointed out in *Maeglin*, he could have easily done without fear of retribution, law or not) does survive into the published *Silmarillion*.

And so even the most villainous of Fëanor's sons finds his own small share of good deeds. Tracing his story back through *The History of Middle-earth*, one discovers a character who often acts out of friendship and benevolence, whose motives are corrupted by the oath that pursues his entire family and leads him to villainous ends.

About the Author

Dawn Felagund is the founder and owner of the Silmarillion Writers' Guild and has authored more than thirty stories based on J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, some of which have been translated and published in fan magazines around the world. These days, she directs her fannish energies towards research projects and developing the SWG into a fun and valuable group for *Silmarillion* fans. Dawn can be emailed at DawnFelagund@gmail.com.