
Character Biography

Daeron of Doriath

By Oshun

Author's Note: This is intended to be a simple summary of the character and not a definitive research piece on every mention of Daeron in Tolkien's earliest versions of his history. Neither is it intended to be a summary of the tale of Lúthien. For better or for worse, I have told Daeron's story as it is presented in published version of *The Silmarillion*, with any references to additional sources specifically noted. More exact citations are given for direct quotations only.

Daeron of Doriath is given high praise, a significant role in plot development, and yet few words in *The Silmarillion*. He is repeatedly referred to throughout *The Silmarillion* as having been the consummate minstrel among the Elves. Even the mighty singer Maglor, son of Fëanor, takes second place to his artistry. While this reader might wish to argue that the creation of the *Noldolantë* would take precedence over crafting songs for Lúthien, there is nothing in canon to back this up.

Although Daeron is most widely known for his love of Lúthien, he must have been a remarkable Elf indeed to have been chosen as the chief loremaster of King Elu Thingol.

The importance of minstrel and loremaster are underlined by the fact that music and memory are two major themes in Tolkien's work. Music wields concrete power in Tolkien's interpretation of his world. First, there is the Music of the Ainur, which literally creates the world that his characters inhabit. We also have the physical power of music manifested in the great song contests, like those of Lúthien before Morgoth and Finrod Felagund with Sauron. Among many other examples of the force of music are the power of Fingon's song that enabled him to find Maedhros or Finrod's ability to bring as clear visions "of the making of Arda, and the bliss of Aman beyond the shadows of the Sea" before the eyes of the men he first came upon in the forest. (*The Silmarillion*, "Of the Coming of Men into the West")

The force of memory is another major pillar of Tolkien's universe, an attribute held in its purest form by all of Elvenkind, but embodied most explicitly in his minstrels and loremasters. Within Tolkien's legendarium, the Elves as quasi-immortal beings retain in living remembrance the details of the greatest defeats and victories, the deeds of its heroes and villains, and the lessons of their past. They preserve intact a history that otherwise will be lost or corrupted when it is forced to reside solely within the faulty memories of mortal Men and supported only by the flawed methods of recording and preserving them of the Secondborn. By contrast, the Elves are the representation of memory made perfect.

Born of a race renowned for its singers and poets, the fact that Daeron is chosen as chief loremaster to Thingol is, within the structure of Tolkien's world, an affirmation of his importance and his talent. While the Noldor, who were much taken up with the study of languages, originally used the script devised by Rúmil of Tirion and later the version perfected by Fëanor, the Sindar were not inclined to commit their history to writing. Daeron, however, devised a Runic alphabet called the *Cirth*.

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Daeron's tragic denouement begins for me with the lines in *The Silmarillion* that state that "the Naugrim that came to Thingol learned them, and were well-pleased with the device, esteeming Daeron's skill higher than did the Sindar, his own people." What can be more frustrating and saddening to a creator than to have one's labor go under-appreciated by those closest to him?

By the Naugrim the *Cirth* were taken east over the mountains and passed into the knowledge of many peoples; but they were little used by the Sindar for the keeping of records, until the days of the War, and much that was held in memory perished in the ruins of Doriath.
The Silmarillion, "Of the Sindar"

If one might say he was not successful in transmitting to his people the compulsion to keep written records, Daeron nonetheless was held in high esteem among his people and given certain authority. After the arrival of the Noldor in Beleriand, it was Daeron, along with Mablung, who was sent by Thingol to offer his salutations at the Mereth Aderthad, the Feast of Reuniting, which Fingolfin, as High King of the Noldor, had called to celebrate the alliances among the Elves being formed against Morgoth. (Note to fanfic writers: yes, Daeron would have had an opportunity to have met and become acquainted with Maglor, Tolkien's other great minstrel.) Additionally, while the Tengwar of Fëanor were eventually used by many peoples throughout Middle-earth for correspondence, chronicles, and administration, a version of Daeron's letters were adopted by the Noldor due to the suitability of their angular form for use in carving upon stonework (*The Lord of the Rings*, "The Return of the King", Appendix E).

In the final version of Daeron's story we are given no clue to his parentage, although one might expect that he was rather highly born, especially in light of the fact that when Daeron first appears in Tolkien's writing in "The Tale of Tinúviel" (*The Book of Lost Tales*, Part II), he is identified there as Dairon, the brother of Lúthien. In *The Shaping of Middle-Earth* (*The History of Middle-Earth*, Vol. 4), he is said to be the one who had loved Lúthien before she met Beren. In the latest version in the published *Silmarillion*, it is said that "Daeron the minstrel also loved Lúthien, and he espied her meetings with Beren, and betrayed them to Thingol." After Beren left upon his quest to obtain a Silmaril from Morgoth's crown and Lúthien discovered that he was being held a prisoner, she went to Daeron, believing that he was the only person who might aid her. Once again, "lest she fail and fade," Daeron reported that Lúthien's intent was to seek to rescue her beloved. Due to Daeron's intervention, Lúthien was restrained and kept aloft in a house in a giant tree, whence it was believed she would not be able to escape. But, she did escape. After Lúthien left Doriath, Daeron, fearing for her life, took off to find her and was never seen again. The last words in *The Silmarillion* regarding the fate of Daeron are reminiscent of the story of Maglor, who also disappeared, wandering and lamenting, his final destiny unknown.

He it was that made music for the dance and song of Lúthien, before Beren came to Doriath; and he had loved her, and set all his thought of her in his music. He became the greatest of all the minstrels of the Elves east of the Sea, named even before Maglor son of Fëanor. But seeking for Lúthien in despair he wandered upon strange paths, and passing over the mountains he came into the East of Middle-earth, where for many ages he made lament beside dark waters for Lúthien, daughter of Thingol, most beautiful of all living things.
The Silmarillion, "Of Beren and Lúthien"

About the Author

Oshun's *Silmarillion*-based stories may be found on the [SWG archive](#).