
Character Biography

Huor

By Robinka

Among the ancient heroes of Men, who lived fast, loved hard and died young,¹ Huor² son of Galdor stands out not only because of his height.³ Even though he indeed died young, his line continued throughout the ages, extending into many generations up to Aragorn and Arwen and their children. In the texts, Huor is most often mentioned in the context of being Húrin's younger brother or the father of Tuor, and he does not seem a popular character in fan fiction. The SWG's search engine returns three stories in which he can be found; the one over at Fanfiction.net returns five results; the one at Open Scrolls Archive two results.

Did he really do so little that he seems hardly mentioned, let alone inspiring? Let us find out.

Live fast

In the "Index of Names" in *The Silmarillion*, Huor is described as follows: son of Galdor of Dor-lómin, husband of Rían and father of Tuor; went to Gondolin with Húrin his brother; slain in the Nirnaeth Arnoediad.⁴

Huor was a scion of the two noble houses of the Edain.

Hador Goldenhead was a lord of the Edain and well-beloved by the Eldar. He dwelt while his days lasted under the lordship of Fingolfin, who gave to him wide lands in that region of Hithlum which was called Dor-lómin. His daughter Glóredhel wedded Haldir son of Halmir, lord of the Men of Brethil; and at the same feast his son Galdor the Tall wedded Hareth, the daughter of Halmir.⁵

As *The Silmarillion* says about the event above, it was a great feast, so one can easily conclude that in spite of the peril in that time, the Edain could find joy in their life.

In the days before the Dagor Bragollach those two houses of the Edain were joined at a great feast, when Galdor and Glóredhel the children of Hador Goldenhead were wedded to Hareth and Haldir the children of Halmir lord of the Haladin.¹

Galdor and Hareth had two sons, Húrin and Huor (born in 444, died in 472 of the First Age).⁷

Huor was three years younger than Húrin and, as mentioned above, he was the tallest of his kin, save only for his own son Tuor. He was also a swift runner, though he was more of a sprinter than a marathon runner, as stated in *Narn I Hîn Hurin*.⁸ The brothers were very close to each other in their younger years. According to the custom of Men of the North in that time, they lived as foster-sons of their uncle Haldir of the Haladin in his household in the forest of Brethil.

Both *The Silmarillion* and *The Children of Húrin* underline that the two brothers went to battle with the men of Brethil against the orcs that spilled out of the north, even though Húrin and Huor were merely teenagers in that time. And it was again a time of war with the Dark Lord.

The Silmarillion Writers' Guild Reference Library

<http://www.silmarillionwritersguild.org/reference/characterofthemonth/huan.php>

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...for Húrin, though only seventeen years of age, was strong, and Huor the younger was already as tall as most full-grown men of that people.⁹

As we can find out in "Of the Ruin of Beleriand and the Fall of Fingolfin" in *The Silmarillion*, "few men of the Three Houses of the Edain would give ear to him [Morgoth], not even were they brought to the torment of Angband. Therefore Morgoth pursued them with hatred."¹⁰

This chapter recounts the tale of the battle in the woods of Brethil that is remembered as a great victory:

The People of Haleth were at first untouched by the northern war, for they dwelt to the southward in the Forest of Brethil; but now there was battle between them and the invading Orcs, for they were stout-hearted men and would not lightly forsake the woods that they loved. And amid the tale of defeats of that time the deeds of the Haladin are remembered with honour: for after the taking of Minas Tirith the Orcs came through the western pass, and maybe would have ravaged even to the mouths of Sirion; but Halmir lord of the Haladin sent swift word to Thingol, for he had friendship with the Elves that guarded the borders of Doriath. Then Beleg Strongbow, chief of the march-wardens of Thingol, brought great strength of the Sindar armed with axes into Brethil; and issuing from the deeps of the forest Halmir and Beleg took an Orc-legion at unawares and destroyed it. Thereafter the black tide out of the North was stemmed in that region, and the Orcs dared not cross the Teiglin for many years after. The People of Haleth dwelt yet in watchful peace in the Forest of Brethil, and behind their guard the Kingdom of Nargothrond had respite, and mustered its strength.¹¹

The above fragment says a lot about the relationship between the Folk of Haleth and the Sindar of Doriath. Not only King Thingol agreed to help them, and we know well that he was not so quick and eager when it came to aid anyone outside the borders of Doriath, not to mention that he had no warm feelings toward Men and he had begrudged the Folk of Haleth their settling down in Brethil to begin with. Also, the allied forces routed the orcs from the woods efficiently, keeping them from going further and threatening other realms. To that battle, the young Húrin and Huor, who would not be restrained, though he was but thirteen years old,¹² went alongside the adult warriors.

Allow me a more personal note here. We can easily believe, reading this part of *The Silmarillion*, that the battle of Brethil was a successful confrontation with the orcs in the times of the Dagor Bragollach. The elves and the Haladin stopped the orcs from invading the south of Beleriand. Therefore, I am very disappointed on behalf of Beleg Cúthalion and his allies that the story told in *The Children of Húrin* disregards that portentous fact and states that Húrin and Huor merely went with a company of scouts. They were ambushed by the orcs and scattered, and the brothers were pursued to the ford of Brithiach.¹³ This has little significance in comparison to the destruction of a legion of orcs that necessarily had to be a great, well-planned effort. And who ambushed whom, I dare ask?

Either way, those scouts, or combatants – whatever the choice might be – did not perform the best of jobs since Haldir's nephews would have been killed, or lost, had not Ulmo come to aid them.

Let us return to *The Silmarillion*:

But being with a company that was cut off from the rest they were pursued to the Ford of Brithiach, and there they would have been taken or slain but for the power of Ulmo, that was still strong in Sirion. A mist arose from the river and hid them from their enemies, and they escaped over the Brithiach into Dimbar, and wandered among the hills beneath the sheer walls of the Crissaegrim, until they were bewildered in the deceits of that land and knew not the way to go on or to return.¹⁴

Before Tuor came into the secret vale of Tumladen, Ulmo had eased his father's way there by leading the two young warriors out of danger. The ever-helpful Thorondor sent two of his eagles to carry Húrin and Huor to the hidden city of Gondolin, which no Man yet had seen.¹⁵ Turgon, advised by Ulmo himself that he should treat them kindly – knowing that the help from the sons of the House of Hador should come to him in need – accepted Húrin and Huor into his kingdom.

They were Turgon's guests and learned a lot from the Gondolindrim, and Turgon would have liked to keep them there, not because of his own law (that no one who saw Gondolin should be let out) but simply out of affection. The two brothers missed their kin, though, and they wanted to live the life of their people, sharing in wars and griefs.¹⁶ That is why they asked Turgon to let them leave in the same way they had come to Gondolin and with their eyes veiled so that they would not know where the city was. Turgon granted them their wish, and the two brothers left, though not before they swore to Maeglin, Turgon's sister-son, that they would never reveal the truth about Gondolin's location.

Turgon's decision seems significant on many levels: in his hospitality, he welcomed the brothers into his secret city and liked to spend his time in their company. He allowed them to leave, not without restrictions, but here, we must remember what happened with Eöl the Dark Elf of Nan Elmoth. Their stay was undoubtedly a huge benefit to them and an opportunity to learn things that otherwise might have been out of their reach. I cannot help but wonder how much of their learning came from the Vala Ulmo's influence and how much from Turgon's wisdom, and I incline to favor the latter. Also, there is an interesting idea one might want to explore further: to think how Idril, Turgon's daughter, received her future father-in-law during her only chance to meet him.

Húrin and Huor returned to Dor-lómin via airway, carried by the eagles once again. Their kinsfolk were happy to have them back, and yet the brothers refused to reveal where they had come from, even to their father.

'Did you then dwell a year in the wild? Or did the eagles house you in their eyries? But you found food and fine raiment, and return as young princes, not as waifs of the wood.'¹⁷

Galdor did not receive an answer, but he guessed the truth.

Let us view the situation in Beleriand from a broader perspective. After the victory in the Dagor Bragollach, Morgoth continued sending out spies to Beleriand to learn tidings of Turgon and Finrod Felagund because he knew little to nothing about their kingdoms, Gondolin and Nargothrond. He feared them, but he kept his hosts of orcs away from Beleriand, preparing an ultimate invasion.

...he [Morgoth] had not measured rightly the valour of the Noldor nor the might in arms of the Men that fought beside them. Great though his victory had been in the Bragollach

and in the years after, and grievous the harm that he had done to his enemies, *his own loss had been no less*; and though he held Dorthonion and the Pass of Sirion, the Eldar recovering from their first dismay began now to regain what they had lost. Thus Beleriand in the south had a semblance of peace again for a few brief years; but the forges of Angband were full of labour. [Emphasis mine]¹⁸

Can we count that orc-legion destroyed during the battle in the forest of Brethil into that – emphasized in the above text – loss? I am certain we can. The Haladin, sure as hell – let me go colloquial here – did step onto Morgoth's toe. Painfully.

Love hard

There was great love between the brothers, and they were seldom apart in their youth.¹⁹

In this outlined portrayal, so far Huor has seemed a kind of shadow of his older brother. That is not surprising because younger siblings often follow their older brothers or sisters. I know that from experience – I have a younger brother. Our protagonist does not seem to have his own voice either, being a boy under the wings of Húrin and his other family members: Haldir, Halmir, etc. We can assume that everyone cared for him, especially Húrin, otherwise a thirteen year-old boy would not have survived such a risky adventure as wandering around the wastelands until Thorondor intervened. In the text, it is Húrin who spoke on behalf of the two of them, which still does not seem surprising – he was older after all.

My overall impression is that Huor was raised in a friendly, loving environment – despite the outside world full of dangers and tough times – that gave him care and heart and taught him to love his land and his people. In return, he cared for them; otherwise he would not have gone to battle as a teenager. He must have been stubborn, in a good way, and had a fiery spirit, just as his name suggests, from a very young age.

We do not know much for certain about Huor's later years as a young man, before the Battle of Unnumbered Tears. We can presume that he lived with or close to his brother, who had become the Lord of Dor-lómin. Very probably, Huor became a seasoned warrior, refining his skills alongside his brother in the battles with enemies in Hithlum.

When seven years had passed since the Fourth Battle, Morgoth renewed his assault, and he sent a great force against Hithlum. The attack on the passes of the Shadowy Mountains was bitter, and in the siege of Eithel Sirion Galdor the tall, Lord of Dor-lómin, was slain by an arrow. That fortress he held on behalf of Fingon the High King; and in that same place his father Hador Lórinđol died but a little time before. Húrin his son was then newly come to manhood, but he was great in strength both of mind and body; and he drove the Orcs with heavy slaughter from Ered Wethrin, and pursued them far across the sands of Anfauglith. (...) Thereafter Húrin son of Galdor ruled the house of Hador in Dor-lómin, and served Fingon.²⁰

It is very probable that Huor accompanied his older brother in that pursuit, as they seem to have been inseparable since their early youth.

Aside from Huor's brotherly love and everything he held dear, there was also room for a more romantic affection in his life. He wedded Rían,²¹ daughter of Belegund son of Bregolas, from the House of Bëor. She was the cousin of Morwen Eledhwen, Húrin's wife.

By hard fate was she born into such days, for she was gentle of heart and loved neither hunting nor war. Her love was given to trees and to the flowers of the wild, and she was a singer and a maker of songs. Two months only had she been wedded to Huor when he went with his brother to the Nirnaeth Arnoediad, and she never saw him again.²²

Do opposites attract? It certainly seems as though, because a delicate and peace-loving young woman married a robust and soldierly man who had been slaying orcs since he was but a boy. But their love story is not of the 'happily ever after' sort.

Die young

And he [Maedhros] gathered together again all his brothers and all the people who would follow them. (...) Moreover in the west Fingon, ever the friend of Maedhros, took counsel with Himring, and in Hithlum the Noldor and the Men of the house of Hador prepared for war. In the forest of Brethil Halmir, lord of the People of Haleth, gathered his men, and they whetted their axes; but Halmir died ere the war came, and Haldir his son ruled that people. (...) All the Noldor of Hithlum were assembled, together with Elves of the Falas and Gwindor's company from Nargothrond, and he [Fingon] had great strength of Men: upon the right were the host of Dor-lómin and all the valour of Húrin and Huor his brother, and to them had come Haldir of Brethil with many men of the woods.²³

Barely out of his honeymoon, Huor left his pregnant wife and accompanied his older brother to battle alongside the Noldor.

Let us look at the scene of war on the side where the armies under the banner of Fingon were stationed. Gwindor of Nargothrond had already rushed in pure wrath to avenge his brother Gelmir and barreled through the gates of Angband. The host of Fingon, which had followed him, was forced to turn back and, during that retreat, Haldir and his men perished in the rearguard. On the plus side, Turgon marched onto the scene to aid his brother, bringing his shiny host from Gondolin.

Turgon hewed his way to the side of his brother; and it is told that the meeting of Turgon with Húrin, who stood beside Fingon, was glad in the midst of battle.²⁴

We can suppose that Turgon met Huor as well.

Unfortunately, treachery ripped the forces of Maedhros apart. Fingon's army was surrounded by the enemies, and the High King of the Noldor was challenged by Gothmog, Lord of Balrogs. Gothmog had broken into the Elvenhosts, pushing Turgon's army aside. Turgon's soldiers were only able to watch as Fingon died in combat. Beside Turgon, there were Húrin and Huor with the remnants of the House of Hador. Húrin urged Turgon to further retreat, pointing that Gondolin still stood and there was hope for the Eldar. When Turgon refused at first, Huor spoke up for the first time, and this is probably the most significant line in what is written about our protagonist in the material. In the advent of certain death, Huor, in a prophetic moment, spoke about his and Turgon's grandson Eärendil:

'Yet if it stands but a little while, then out of your house shall come the hope of Elves and Men. This I say to you, lord, with the eyes of death: though we part here for ever, and I shall not look on your white walls again, from you and from me a new star shall arise. Farewell!'²⁵

By allowing Turgon's forces to escape toward the Pass of Sirion and holding the rearguard, the Men of Dor-lómin paid back dearly for the other men's treachery, and they stood against the overwhelming forces of Morgoth, until almost all of the warriors were slain.

There as the sun westered on the sixth day, and the shadow of Ered Wethrin grew dark, Huor fell pierced with a venomed arrow in his eye, and all the valiant Men of Hador were slain about him in a heap.²⁶

Húrin was taken captive and dragged to Angband. Huor's wife, Rían met her sad fate soon.

When no tidings came of her lord she fled into the wild; but she was aided by the Grey-elves of Mithrim, and when her son Tuor was born they fostered him. Then Rían departed from Hithlum, and going to the Haudh-en-Ndengin [the Hill of Slain²⁷] she laid herself down upon it and died.²⁸

Reception

Having read and thought about Huor, I can see a lot of parallels between him and his long-distant descendant Arathorn II. Even though Huor did not happen to be a leader of his people, and Arathorn was a chieftain of the Dúnedain, they seem to have a lot in common. They were warriors. They died in their prime to leave a young widow and a son behind. Their sons were fostered by the elves: Tuor by the Grey Elf Annael, Aragorn by Elrond. Their sons married elven women – Idril Celebrindal and Arwen Undómiel respectively – and of those two unions, the hope for both kindreds, Elves and Men, was born. Both Huor and Arathorn were killed by an arrow in the eye. Finally, both of them were loyal and courageous.

When I typed Arathorn into a search engine at Open Scrolls Archive, it returned nine results. The one at Fanfiction.net – two results. Not too many. But at least at the Naice a Nilme story archive, there are fifteen stories in which he features, and the winner is the Stories of Arda archive: forty results. In the latter, Huor is not even listed in the collection of characters we can choose from.

So why does he seem a neglected hero? I have no simple answer to this question, except maybe that he might seem boring to those readers and interpreters of Tolkien's legendarium who favor bad boys – those complicated souls whom we both love and despise at times.

I imagine him as a tall, golden-haired, blue-eyed and fierce warrior ("the people of Hador were of yet greater strength and stature, mighty among the Children of Eru, ready in mind, bold and steadfast. Yellowhaired they were for the most part and blue-eyed"²⁹). He loved his people, his land, and his family; was a caring brother; a loyal ally to the Noldor and the Sindar alike, and pure bravery in the guise of a Secondborn. He should, in my opinion, inspire more artistic ventures because, I suspect, he would have liked to be a fully developed character, not only somebody else's brother or father, and a mere mention in passing.

Author's note: Thank-yous go to Dawn Felagund for her beta help and to Oshun because the bios of Turgon and Tuor she has written were very helpful.

Works Cited

1. Lyrics by American country music singer and song writer Faron Young (1932-1996).
2. Compound Sindarin Names in Middle-earth at Tolkien.com decipher his name as follows: heart-vigour, courage; hûr ("vigour, fiery spirit") + gor (from primitive *gore "violence, impetus, haste").
3. Tolkien often used this trait and made a few specific characters the tallest among their kind, vide: Maedhros, Thingol, Galadriel, Huor, Tuor, etc. I, however, am not sure I buy this 'height' fetish, because when almost everyone is to be freakishly tall, how it can be significant?
4. *The Silmarillion*, "The Index of Names," p. 404.
5. *Unfinished Tales, Narn I Hîn Hurin*, p. 60.
6. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Ruin of Beleriand and the Fall of Fingolfin", p. 184.
7. *The War of the Jewels, The Grey Annals*, pp. 51, 71.
8. *Unfinished Tales, Narn I Hîn Hurin*, p. 60.
9. *The Children of Húrin*, "The Childhood of Túrin", p. 35.
10. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Ruin of Beleriand and the Fall of Fingolfin", p. 183.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 184.
13. *The Children of Húrin*, "The Childhood of Túrin", p. 35.
14. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Ruin of Beleriand and the Fall of Fingolfin", p. 184.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. 185.
17. Ibid., p. 186.
18. Ibid., p. 187.
19. *The Children of Húrin*, "The Childhood of Túrin", p. 34.
20. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Ruin of Beleriand and the Fall of Fingolfin", p. 187.
21. In *The Grey Annals*, there are two dates of their wedding: year 471 F.A. and in the next paragraph 472 F.A.
22. *The Children of Húrin*, "The Childhood of Túrin", p. 35.
23. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Fifth Battle: Nirnaeth Arnoediad", pp. 224-225.
24. Ibid., p. 227.
25. Ibid., p. 230.
26. Ibid.
27. A great hill raised by orcs after the Nirnaeth Arnoediad to bury the Elves and Edain fallen in the battle.
28. *The Silmarillion*, "Of Túrin Turambar", p. 235.
29. *The War of the Jewels, The Grey Annals*, p. 50.

About the Author

A lifelong president of the fanclub of Beleg Cúthalion, Robinka (also known as Binka) has a healthy dose of admiration for the Grey Folk of Doriath, but approaches the Noldor with reverence. She is a proud owner of a T-shirt with the caption: "Beleg lives! I don't care what Túrin says.". Binka lives in Poland with her husband and a rescued dog. Her path in the fandom is rocky, but nothing short of adventurous.