
Character Biography

Mîm

By Oshun

The story of Mîm the Dwarf is relentlessly depressing and, in the context of the great narratives of *The Silmarillion*, short. Yet, Tolkien created a poignant description of him and his history. The tale of Mîm in *The Children of Húrin* is somewhat expanded in relation to, but consistent with, the one found in *The Silmarillion*. Mîm evolves from an outright wicked villain in his earliest appearances in the texts to a near-tragic figure as Tolkien revised his conception of the character of Dwarves in general.

Mîm is described as a descendant of the Dwarves from the great Dwarf-cities of the east whence his ancestors had been driven. Before Morgoth returned from Aman to Middle-earth they made their way west into Beleriand. *The War of the Jewels* (HoME, Vol. 11) states that they had left or been driven out from those communities, being deformed or undersized, or slothful and rebellious. *The Silmarillion* says that they had become "diminished in stature and in smith-craft." Apparently "diminished in stature" actually does mean "shorter than" the average Dwarf had tended to be and not "declined in reputation or prominence"; in various sources, including *The Children of Húrin*, the reference to their physical size is explicit.

Never having encountered the Dwarves of Nogrod and Belegost before they crossed the mountains to the west, the Elves of Beleriand did not know what manner of beings these reduced brothers of the Naugrim were. In their ignorance, they had hunted them down and killed them. Eventually, the Elves were to leave them alone and to name them the Petty-Dwarves or in Sindarin, *Noegyth Nibin*. A significant detail regarding the Petty-Dwarves added in *The Children of Húrin* is that their craft declined at least in part because they found it difficult to secure the ore they needed to engage in their smith-craft.

By the time a reader of *The Silmarillion* encounters the Petty-Dwarves, living in Amon Rûdh in middle Beleriand, only Mîm and his two sons Ibun and Khîm remain of their community. Beleaguered and rejected, they are described as loving none but themselves and hating not only the Orcs but also the Eldar and particularly the Noldor, who they claimed had taken their land from them.

While traveling in the Amon Rûdh area, Túrin and his band of outlaws are surprised by three shadowy figures, not clearly visible among the trees and underbrush, bearing what appear to be heavy bags. Túrin's men manage to grab the slowest of the three, Mîm, and shoot arrows at the others as they escape. Mîm is forced to lead Túrin and the outlaws to his hidden halls in exchange for his life. When they arrive at Mîm's home and stronghold, they discover that Mîm's son, Khîm, has been killed by one the arrows they had unloosed after the fleeing Petty-Dwarves. Listening to Mîm's piteous grieving for his lost son causes Túrin to repent his harsh treatment of him and he offers to pay Mîm a ransom of gold if he should ever come into such wealth. Túrin and his men live within Mîm's halls for a time, respecting the Petty-Dwarf's warnings not to lead others to the hidden site. With the passage of time, although Mîm never learns to love Túrin, he does come to respect him.

However, when Beleg Cúthalion arrives, following after Túrin, Mîm becomes angry. Mîm hates Beleg, of course, given the ugly history of the Elves and the Petty-Dwarfs. Eventually Mîm escapes from the outlaws, but his last son Ibûn does not survive, apparently having been killed by Orcs. After Túrin kills Glaurung the mighty dragon who has been guarding the ruins of Nargothrond and the cache of gold, jewels and artifacts left there, Mîm somehow finds his way to Nargothrond and takes the treasure abandoned there.

Húrin Thalion, Túrin's father, who has been allowed by Morgoth, for his own sinister reasons, to see everything that has happened to Túrin up to that time, encounters Mîm, still in Nargothrond. Húrin kills Mîm, now the last of the Petty-Dwarves, holding him responsible at least in part for the fate of his son. With his dying words, Mîm utters a curse upon the treasure of Nargothrond. The gold and treasure of Nargothrond, brought to Doriath by Húrin, finally does become the principle reason for the fall of Doriath and the death of King Thingol.

In this piece, unless otherwise noted, I have used the published version of *The Children of Húrin* for elements of the story of Mîm as recounted in the *Narn i Chîn Húrin* ("Lay of the Children of Húrin"), from the *Unfinished Tales*.

About the Author

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