

---

# Character Biography

## Rían

By Robinka

---

Among the colossal variety of characters in J.R.R. Tolkien's legendarium, there are many whose sole recognition is based on somebody else's merit, be it that of a sibling, child, or spouse. Of course, there are many of characters that have names to them, and with a name sort of comes a face, especially if we consider the imagination of fanfiction writers. But crowds upon crowds of characters do not even have names, and all we know about them is that they must have been – as if their only purpose was to be someone's mother or father – after all, Tolkien did not have his characters multiply by gemmation. With the exception of the Valar...

However, having a name does not guarantee having a *role* in the legendarium, let alone being an important character. Representing that assemblage of characters, our heroine here today is Rían – the wife of Huor and the mother of Tuor as said in "The Index of Names" in *The Silmarillion*.<sup>1</sup> The entirety of the three lines found there about Rían define her by her relationship with other people, listing her male relatives, including her father and his more famous uncle. It is also stated that she died of grief on the Haudh-en-Ndengin.<sup>2</sup> Let us take a closer look at her.

### The daughter of the House of Bëor

Rían was born in the year 450 of the First Age to the first of the Three Houses of the Edain – the House of Bëor.<sup>3</sup> Her father was Belegund son of Bregolas (the brother of Barahir, Beren's father). Her mother must have existed, but we know nothing about her, even--as is often the case--her name. It is noteworthy that she was the daughter of the oldest and the smallest of those three houses that allied themselves to the Eldar since the beginning of their history. As if to keep the balance between those more and less significant characters in the legendarium, Rían was also the cousin of Morwen Eledhwen, Húrin's wife and an important female character of the First Age,<sup>4</sup> and closely related to Beren Erchamion.

There were fair-haired men and women among the Folk of Bëor, but most of them had brown hair (going usually with brown eyes), and many were less fair in skin, some indeed being swarthy. Men as tall as the Folk of Hador were rare among them, and most were broader and more heavy in build. In association with the Eldar, especially with the followers of King Finrod, they became as enhanced in arts and manners as the Folk of Hador, but if these surpassed them in swiftness of mind and body, in daring and noble generosity, the Folk of Bëor were more steadfast in endurance of hardship and sorrow, slow to tears or to laughter; their fortitude needed no hope to sustain it.<sup>5</sup>

The above characteristics bring to mind a bunch of grim men and women, among whom Rían may have seemed a sort of outsider.

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.<sup>6</sup>

---

And yet, this delicate woman who did not like war had been entangled into one since she was born. Whether she inherited her traits that were uncommon among Bëor's folk from her mother, or whether she developed her dislike of brutal occupations from living in the times of the Dagor Bragollach, she must have endured enough to become fed up with violence.

Her father Belegund was Barahir's nephew, and she dwelt with Barahir's wife, Emeldir the Manhearted, in Dorthonion.<sup>7</sup> Morgoth pursued Barahir's folk to death, and so Emeldir decided to flee with those people who remained with her.

(...) Emeldir the Manhearted his wife (whose mind was rather to fight beside her son and her husband than to flee) gathered together all the women and children that were left, and gave arms to those that would bear them; and she led them into the mountains that lay behind, and so by perilous paths, until they came at last with loss and misery to Brethil. Some were there received among the Haladin, but some passed on over the mountains to Dor-lómin and the people of Galdor, Hador's son; and among those were Rían, daughter of Belegund, and Morwen, who was named Eledhwen, that is Elf-sheen, daughter of Baragund.<sup>8</sup>

Among the refugees was Rían, a six-year-old girl at that time. She came to live among the folk of Galdor, who was the father of her future husband, Huor.

### **A woman in love**

At that time, Huor,<sup>9</sup> a boy in his early teens, along with his older brother Húrin, lived as a foster-son of Haldir of the Haladin, their uncle, in Brethil. After many adventures, including raiding a host of Orcs out of the forest and a subsequent airway trip to Gondolin, he came back to Dórlomin, where he might have met Rían.

We do not know any specific details of their relationship prior to their marriage and Huor's departure to the Nirnaeth Arnoediad. We can only infer how it developed. It is likely that, given her interests, Rían pursued a quieter occupation and did not care much for all that "warrior kind of stuff". And while Huor may have gone to many battles in Hithlum under his brother's command, she was probably more inclined toward solitary strolls in the gardens, where she could think up songs.

Was it love at first sight or a slow courtship? We cannot be sure. Deep down in my sappy, romantic heart, I like to think that it was a kind of thunderstrike for Huor when he fell in love with her. And as for Rían – she was drawn to him like a moth to a flame, enchanted by his fiery spirit, open-heartedness, by his being easy-going and like an open book: what was on his mind or in his heart reflected in what he said and did. This is how I like to imagine him. Possibly, Rían reasoned with herself and, because of love, managed to overlook that Huor was a soldier and had been one since he was but a boy at his brother's side. Perhaps it was not an easy task to trust him, and she had an internal dispute with herself. Maybe he won her over slowly, showing her that he was much more than only a brutal orc-slayer. After all, he had spent some time at the court of Turgon in Gondolin and that lesson probably paid off as far as his relationship with the gentle song-maker was concerned.

---

## Desperate housewife

Rían wedded Huor in the first days of spring of the year 472 of the First Age.<sup>10</sup>

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.<sup>11</sup>

Having no tidings of her husband's fate, Rían fled into the wild. Distraught and mad with grief, she might have perished, but the Grey Elves of the Ered Wethrim aided her. She gave birth to a son, Tuor, before the end of the Year of Lamentation.

And Rían said to the Elves: "Let him be called *Tuor*, for that name his father chose, ere war came between us. And I beg of you to foster him, and to keep him hidden in your care; for I forebode that great good, for Elves and Men, shall come from him. But I must go in search of Huor, my lord."

Then the Elves pitied her; but one Annael, who alone of all that went to war from that people had returned from the Nirnaeth, said to her: "Alas, lady, it is known now that Huor fell at the side of Húrin his brother; and he lies, I deem, in the great hill of slain that the Orcs have raised upon the field of battle."<sup>12</sup>

Just as her husband foresaw the hope for both kindreds, Elves and Men, coming from his line and the heirs of Turgon, in the hour of his death, similarly Rían perceived that not all hope was lost yet, even though her life meant nothing to her from then on. She left the Elves' dwelling and wandered to the plain of Anfauglith, where she laid herself upon the Hill of Slain and died.

So when there was no one to anchor Rían in her life any longer, Tuor alone seeming not enough to do so, our heroine passed away, having left an infant behind her. I would venture a comment that her recent labor, exhaustion, and fear likely brought on her demise. It seems that she was totally dependent on other characters, and when her family was torn apart ("... Morwen wife of Húrin abode in Hithlum, for she was with child," as stated in *The Grey Annals*<sup>13</sup>) there was no point in carrying on. Without her husband – her primary and most important definition and reason to live – Rían's life seemed to make no sense to her. Despite the hope she had foretold, she had no future.

---

**Author's Note:** Thank yous to Dawn for her help and beta-reading.

---

## Works Cited

1. *The Silmarillion*, "The Index of Names", p. 419.
2. The Hill of Slain, located in the plain of Anfauglith, where, after the Nirnaeth Arnoediad, the bodies of the Elves and Men were piled.
3. *The War of the Jewels*, *The Grey Annals*, p. 52.
4. *The Children of Húrin*, "The Childhood of Túrin", p. 34.
5. *The Peoples of Middle Earth*, *Late Writings*, "Of Dwarves and Men", p. 308.
6. *The Children of Húrin*, "The Childhood of Túrin", p. 34.
7. In *The Annals of Beleriand* and *Quenta Silmarillion* found in Volume 5 of *The History of Middle-earth*, Rían and her mother lived in Hithlum and therefore did not have to escape from Dorthonion. *The Grey Annals* (HoMe 11) offer the story of Emeldir and the escape of the women and children from the highlands, and this was the version on which the published *Silmarillion* was based.
8. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Ruin of Beleriand and the Fall of Fingolfin", pp. 180-181.
9. For further details on Huor, see [Huor's biography](#) at the Silmarillion Writers' Guild.
10. In *The Grey Annals*, there are two dates of their wedding: year 471 F.A. and, in the next paragraph, 472 F.A. While the latter adds more heartache to their relationship, as Huor left for battle only two months after the wedding, notes on the *Annals* suggest that the 471 date was Tolkien's final revision.
11. *The Children of Húrin*, "The Childhood of Túrin", p. 34.
12. *Unfinished Tales*, *Of Tuor and His Coming to Gondolin*, p. 27.
13. *The War of the Jewels*, *The Grey Annals*, p. 79.

---

## 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.