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## Character Biography

### Saeros

By Robinka

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Today's character probably does not inspire positive feelings among the fans of J.R.R. Tolkien's works; although he does not seem an utter villain in the grand scheme, in comparison to other bad boys (and girls), his certain personality traits are those of a regular baddie. As one of the very few negatively portrayed elves in the entire legendarium, he was responsible for the outcome that became another twist in Túrin's complicated fate and another factor of his impending catastrophe. In my private opinion, he and Túrin can also shake hands because both of the characters are classic examples, each to a different extent though, of the Biblical proverb: *Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before stumbling*.<sup>1</sup>Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce Saeros of the Nandor.<sup>2</sup>

### Falling from fool to villain<sup>3</sup>

Saeros<sup>4</sup>(date of birth unknown – died F.A. 484<sup>5</sup>) is an elf that features in the tragic story of the children of Húrin, which itself is one of the earliest tales that Tolkien ever composed, dating back to the late 1910s as per Christopher Tolkien's commentary.<sup>6</sup>Saeros is introduced in the published *Silmarillion* in the chapter "Of Túrin Turambar" as well as in *Narn i Hîn Húrin* in *Unfinished Tales*, and in *The Children of Húrin*. He is also present in the earlier versions of the tale, such as *The Lay of the Children of Húrin* and the early versions of *The Silmarillion* scattered throughout various volumes of *The History of Middle-earth*, and in the course of this biography we will see how he has evolved. Although, the core of his story in J.R.R. Tolkien's legendarium remains the same, there are certain elements to it that have changed, disappeared, or become more developed. Out of necessity, in the published *Silmarillion* it is brief, but in *Narn i Hîn Húrin*, *The Children of Húrin*, and some of the earlier versions it is more detailed. Also, it is impossible to discuss Saeros' biography without taking Túrin into account, because – as we will see soon – the character of Túrin is essential here, while a few other characters not necessarily, as they pop in or drop out, depending on the version of the tale.

First and foremost, the name.<sup>7</sup>It has not always been Saeros.

Orgof taunted him [Túrin], and the people of Hithlum, and in his wrath he smote Orgof with a cup.<sup>8</sup>

In the early versions of the story his name was Orgof. To complicate the matter more, Christopher Tolkien comments on Saeros' name in the "Appendix" to *The Children of Húrin*: "It seems, incidentally, certain from a closer understanding of the relations of the manuscripts that my father rejected the name *Saeros* and replaced it by *Orgol*, which by 'linguistic accident' coincides with Old English *orgol*, *orgel* 'pride'. But it seems to me too late now to remove *Saeros*." So the logical reason to stick to 'Saeros' comes out of the chronology of publishing: *The Silmarillion* (1977), *Unfinished Tales* (1980), *The History of Middle-earth* (the 1983/96s), and finally *The Children of Húrin* (2007).

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As often in case of Tolkien's characters, we do not know a lot about Saeros and his life before his appearance in the tale. Let us start with the published *Silmarillion*, which says that he was of the Nandorin tribe (out of which "many went north and entered the guarded realm of Thingol, and were merged with his people"<sup>9</sup> after the first battle of Beleriand<sup>10</sup>) and "high in the counsels of the King",<sup>11</sup> so we may easily assume he was an important figure in the court, respected for his advice and wisdom. Which, I will say, if you let me smuggle in another personal opinion, I have to question basing on his behavior toward Túrin.

In the early versions however, Saeros' origin differs:

On a time at the table of the king he [Túrin] was taunted by a foolish Elf, Orgof by name, with his rough garb and strange looks. And Orgof in jest slighted the maidens and wives of the Men of Hithlum.<sup>12</sup>

So, he might have not been as wise as we presumed:

And at the same table sat one of the Dark-elves, Orgof by name, and he was proud and was no lover of Men, and thought that Túrin had slighted him; for Túrin would oft make no answer to words that others spoke to him.<sup>13</sup>

If we open a catalogue of features, we should add pride and prejudice to the aforementioned stupidity. Which makes me wonder whether Saeros had always been like this, or whether his life in court spoiled him. Did he usually make poor jokes at the table? Or did he specifically target Túrin, and that was stupid of him and ultimately lead to his demise? Perhaps, he should have asked why Túrin had not answered him, though I kind of suspect that such a question would have gone unanswered, too.

In our investigation, we could not miss the more detailed and at the same time the earliest versions of the story of Saeros. They bring us a few surprises regarding his portrayal and the development of his character. Firstly, the prose:

Now about the courts of Tinwelint [Thingol] there dwelt an Elf called Orgof, and he, as were the most of that king's folk, was an Ilkorin,<sup>14</sup> yet he had Gnome-blood also. Of his mother's side he was nearly akin to the king himself, and was in some favour being a good hunter and an Elf of prowess, yet was he somewhat loose with his tongue and overweening by reason of his favour with the king; yet of nothing was he so fain as of fine raiment and of jewels and of gold and silver ornament, and was ever himself clad most bravely.<sup>15</sup>

Then, the verse:

An Elf there was – Orgof – of the ancient race  
that was lost in the lands where the long marches  
from the quiet waters of Cuiviénen  
were made in the mirk of the midworld's gloom,  
ere light was lifted aloft o'er earth;  
but blood of the Gnomes was blent in his veins.  
He was close akin to the King of Doriath –  
a hardy hunter and his heart was brave,  
but loose his laughter and light his tongue,

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and his pride outran his prowess in arms.  
 He was fain before all of fine raiment  
 and of gems and jewels, and jealous of such  
 as found favour before himself.<sup>16</sup>

In the beginning, Saeros was of the Dark Elves and had a bit of Noldorin blood. That itself may cast a new light upon the issue of Thingol's dislike toward the Noldor (and maybe even on the ban of Quenya from Doriath since during the feast, that ended up disastrous for Saeros, the people of Doriath listened to the "songs of the city of Tûn neath Tain-Gwethil, towering mountain/where the great gods sit and gaze on the world/from the guarded shores of the gulf of Faërie",<sup>17</sup>—though those, I guess, could be in Sindarin, too). However, Saeros was Thingol's kinsman so that might have earned him brownie points to begin with and Thingol might have ignored his Noldorin heritage. Saeros was also a good hunter with a brave heart. We have something positive about him, but soon we find out that he talked too much, especially about the favors he enjoyed in Thingol's retinue, and most of all that he was proud, vain, and prone to jealousy. It is interesting to see those positive features later gone, along with the vanishing of Saeros' Noldorin blood and his being Thingol's relative. His love for jewelry in general remains, however, and the empty spots in his portrayal seem to have been filled with the racism-colored envy and malice. A mightier caliber, no less.

Back to the published *Silmarillion*, it is said there explicitly that "he had long begrudged to Túrin the honour he received as Thingol's fosterson".<sup>18</sup> Saeros was jealous of the respect that Túrin had gained throughout the years of his stay in Doriath. Perhaps, he also felt threatened that he would lose his position in Thingol's retinue. He might have assumed that once Túrin came back from the northern marches to settle in Menegroth for good, he would become a true heir to Thingol, renowned for both warfare and diplomacy. Saeros might have feared that Túrin would become the real star of Thingol's court, and he himself – like Antonio Salieri in Miloš Forman's *Amadeus* – would be forced to accept his being the second best. And that prospect seemed unbearable to him, so he obviously wanted, and needed, to do something about it, proving at the same time that Nandorin elves could crave privileges and glamour of the life in court, in spite of, and contrary to, their secrecy- and nature-loving attitude:

Those were the Nandor; and they became a people apart, unlike their kin, save that they loved water, and dwelt most beside falls and running streams. Greater knowledge they had of living things, tree and herb, bird and beast, than all other Elves.<sup>19</sup>

According to *Narn i Hîn Húrin*, Saeros, son of Ithilbor,<sup>20</sup>

was of the Nandor, being one of those who took refuge in Doriath after the fall of their lord Denethor upon Amon Ereb, in the first battle of Beleriand. These Elves dwelt for the most part in Arthórien, between Aros and Celon in the east of Doriath, wandering at times over Celon into the wild lands beyond; and they were no friends to the Edain since their passage through Ossiriand and settlement in Estolad. But Saeros dwelt mostly in Menegroth, and won the esteem of the king; and **he was proud, dealing haughtily with those whom he deemed of lesser state and worth than himself**. He became a friend of Daeron<sup>21</sup>—the minstrel, for he also was skilled in song; and he had no love for Men, and least of all for any kinsman of Beren Erchamion.<sup>22</sup>[Emphasis mine]

Even without a thorough psychological analysis, we can deduce that Saeros must have had some complexes: superiority blended with inferiority. He tended to think that those around him,

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with the probable exception of the obvious few, were worse than him. Maybe, in the beginning of his life in Doriath, someone had shown him their superiority because Saeros was Nandorin.<sup>23</sup> He thought himself worse and had to make up for that, constantly proving to others and to himself that he was worthy, and better, than others. He had a talent in that department, because he had become “great among the people of Doriath”<sup>24</sup> and the king trusted him enough to make him one of his counsellors. His aversion toward the race of Men seemed the fruit of a general attitude of his tribe, but was also fueled by the sad and unrequited love that Daeron had for Lúthien.

From there, it could only go downhill, and Túrin, being Beren’s kinsman, must have placed on the topmost of Saeros’ list of least favorite people to begin with, and it was not even Túrin’s fault. Let us listen to Saeros:

“Is it not strange,” said he, “that this land should be opened to yet another of this unhappy race? Did not the other do harm enough in Doriath?”<sup>25</sup>

Caught up in his hatred, Saeros could never accept Túrin’s becoming the king’s fosterson and having gained respect among the people of Doriath on his own, not by the king’s wish or order. Therefore Saeros

looked askance on Túrin and on all that he did, saying what ill he could of it; but his words were cunning and his malice veiled. If he met with Túrin alone, he spoke haughtily to him and showed plain his contempt; and Túrin grew weary of him, though for long he returned ill words with silence, for Saeros was great among the people of Doriath and a counsellor of the King. But the silence of Túrin displeased Saeros as much as his words.<sup>26</sup>

To me, it looks like a regular bully with the hidden agenda, and I cannot help but say that either way Túrin was doomed to become the unfortunate recipient of Saeros’ vicious machinations, as, it seems, there was no way out of this ‘clench’, none other than something of a violent nature.

### **I don’t want to spoil the party so I’ll go<sup>27</sup>**

The versions of the story of Saeros bring different circumstances in which Saeros and Túrin met at the table in the king’s halls on that ill-fated day. The early tale describes a feast to honor Túrin and other march wardens thrown by Thingol himself.

Then the fame of the fights on the far marches  
 were carried to the court of the King of Doriath,  
 and tales of Túrin were told in his halls,  
 and how Beleg the ageless was brother-in-arms  
 to the black-haired boy from the beaten people.  
 Then the king called them to come before him  
 ever and anon when the Orc-raids waned;  
 to rest them and revel, and to raise awhile  
 the secret songs of the sons of Ing.  
 On a time was Túrin at the table of Thingol –  
 there was laughter long and the loud clamour  
 of a countless company that quaffed the mead,  
 amid the wine of Dor-Winion that went ungrudged

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in their golden goblets; and goodly meats  
there burdened the boards, neath the blazing torches  
set high in those halls that were hewn of stone.<sup>28</sup>

When Túrin showed up in Menegroth, in the presence of the royal couple, his attire and bearing drew jokes out of Saeros. They seemed innocent at first and there does not seem to be any ulterior motive in Saeros, anything past the itch to stupidly making fun as a court jester would do.

Now costly clad in colours gleaming  
he sat on a seat that was set on high  
near the king and queen and close to Túrin.  
When those twain were at table he had taunted him oft,  
lightly with laughter, for his loveless ways,  
his haggard raiment and hair unshorn;  
but Túrin untroubled neither turned his head  
nor wasted words on the wit of Orgof.<sup>29</sup>

However, Túrin's lack of answer was what spurred Saeros to come up with degrading, racist remarks, insults thrown around in an alcohol-induced stupor and to tell Túrin off, despite the presence of the monarchs. We can suspect that during such a party there was a grand commotion, so not everyone would hear the stream of Saeros' speech, but we have to also remember that he sat near the king and queen, among the greats of Doriath, and they would for certain hear him say: "I don't want you here. Go home, human!" only wording that differently.

... this fool would not give him peace, making a laugh of his rough clothes and tangled hair, for Túrin had then come new from a long abiding in the woods, and at length he drew forth daintily a comb of gold that he had and offered it to Túrin; and having drunk well, when Túrin deigned not to notice him he said: "Nay, and thou knowst not how to use a comb, hie thee back to thy mother, for she perchance will teach thee – unless in sooth the women of Hithlum be as ugly as their sons and as little kempt."<sup>30</sup>

Saeros was really asking for an abrupt end to his tantrum.

Fast forward to the later versions, and here is what we can find about the party in the *Narn* and in *The Children of Húrin*.

When Túrin was twenty years old<sup>31</sup> and for three years had lived among the march wardens, becoming a mighty warrior, one evening he returned to Menegroth seeking rest and needing smithwork for his armor. At that time, Thingol and Melian were out in the woods, as it was the king's delight in the high summer. Túrin came into the hall and took a seat

without heed, for he was wayworn, and filled with thought; and by ill-luck he set himself at a board among the elders of the realms, and in that place where Saeros was accustomed to sit.<sup>32</sup>

Let us look at the stage in this significant moment. We have Túrin, all ragged, dirty, smelly, and in his worn-out attire, "his hair was unkempt, and his mail covered with a grey cloak stained with the weather",<sup>33</sup> come in and sit mindlessly where he sees a chair. As fate has it, it is Saeros' place of choice.

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Can you hear the *Jaws* music theme now?

Saeros, entering late, was angered, believing that Túrin had done this in pride, and with intent to affront him; and his anger was not lessened to find that Túrin was not rebuked by those that sat there, but was welcomed as one worthy to sit among them.<sup>34</sup>

Upon reading this, we may wonder whether Saeros was just late because something had stopped him, or maybe it was his usual manner of entering with a bang because he wanted to be noticed. Perhaps, he would have done that without Túrin there, walking in like a king – and we have to remember that in this version Thingol and Melian were absent – knowing that Thingol was not there, and everyone in the hall would have welcomed him as he deserved. Bad luck though, his seat was taken, by no other than the foundling that had become the king's fosterson, a Man at that, and in dire need of soap and water.

Apparently, Saeros measured other people by his own yardstick and thought that Túrin had done what he himself would do – his sole purpose would be to humiliate the opponent. Would Saeros accept an explanation? I highly doubt that. However, no one was about to explain themselves.

Worse yet, no one reacted to Túrin's odd presence as Saeros would have expected, so he decided to pretend for a while that he was friendly. He took another seat, at the board across from Túrin and said:

“Seldom does the march-warden favour us with his company ... and I gladly yield my accustomed seat for the chance of speech with him.”<sup>35</sup>

The jab was not subtle, yet Túrin did not react, so Saeros piled him with a lot of false-layered questions concerning Túrin's life on the borders until Túrin grew weary of them and frowned, which Saeros took personally and he could no longer be calm.

He took out a golden comb, and cast it on the board before Túrin, saying: “Doubtless, Man of Hithlum, you came in haste to this table, and may be excused your ragged cloak; but you have no need to leave your head untended as a thicket of brambles. And perhaps if your ears were uncovered you would hear better what is said to you.”<sup>36</sup>

We have already added vanity to the list of Saeros' features. For certain, we should add lack of perceptiveness because Saeros did not get Túrin's warning, silent, albeit clear. This was his show, so he announced:

“If the Men of Hithlum are so wild and fell, of what sort are the women of that land? Do they run like deer clad only in their hair?”<sup>37</sup>

Túrin's reaction was immediate. He cast a drinking vessel at Saeros, gravely harming him in the mouth, then he drew his sword, but Mablung restrained him, minimizing bloodshed, at least temporarily, because Saeros challenged Túrin to a duel outside the halls, calling him a “woodwise”.<sup>38</sup> Yet, Túrin left without a response.

To me, exceptionally interesting is Mablung's role in this scene, because he, seeming a peacemaker and the voice of reason, blamed Saeros for his misfortune, warned him to keep himself in firm check unless Saeros wanted to get killed.

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“... but if either be slain it will be an evil deed, more fit for Angband than Doriath, and more evil will come of it. Indeed I think that some shadow of the North has reached out to touch us tonight. Take heed, Saeros son of Ithilbor, lest you do the will of Morgoth in your pride, and remember that you are of the Eldar.”<sup>39</sup>

Saeros should have listened to the wise man. However somewhere above the whole scene, there was the curse of Morgoth hovering, which Mablung promptly recognized and which kept poisoning Saeros' thoughts during the night when he nursed his injury as well as his malice.<sup>40</sup>

### **It's gametime!<sup>41</sup>**

On the next day Saeros waylaid Túrin as he set out from Menegroth to return to the marches.<sup>42</sup>

And he signed his own death sentence, because he was hardly a match for Túrin<sup>43</sup>—despite his own prowess. Saeros lost his shield first, then his sword. And lastly, the fight turned even worse and more humiliating for him because Túrin was stronger and threw Saeros on the ground, stripped him and forced him, with the point of his sword in Saeros' backside, to rampage naked through the woods.

“Saeros,” he [Túrin] said, “there is a long race before you, and clothes will be a hindrance; hair must suffice. (...) Run, run, mocker of women!”<sup>44</sup>

Fulfilling Túrin's need of avenge his mother's and sister's virtues, Saeros kept on running, and with the two ran many of the people of Doriath who were alerted by Saeros' cries for help. Among them, there was Mablung, who tried to stop Túrin, only spurring him to chase Saeros farther. While Mablung in his thoughtfulness saw Morgoth's doings in the scandalous outcome, none of the elves knew that Saeros had assailed Túrin first with the firm intention of slaying him.

Let us have a closer look at the scene in this significant moment:

(...) and he [Saeros], despairing of aid and thinking his death close behind, ran wildly on, until he came suddenly to a brink where a stream that fed Esgalduin flowed in a deep cleft through high rocks, and it was wide for a deer-leap. There Saeros in his great fear attempted the leap; but he failed of his footing on the far side and fell back with a cry, and was broken on a great stone in the water. So he ended his life in Doriath; and long would Mandos hold him.<sup>45</sup>

Well, (un)fortunately, it was not the Matrix...

The death of Saeros and Mablung's subsequent demand that Túrin go back with him and other witnesses to Menegroth for a trial had an unexpected result, but in the future it would become Túrin's trademark: do first, then think, and change his name.

“Unhappy fool! From here I would have let him walk back to Menegroth. Now he had laid a guilt upon me undeserved. ...

“I will not seek King's Thingol pardon for nothing; and I will go now where his doom cannot find me. You have but two choices: to let me go free, or to slay me, if that would fit your law. For you are too few to take me alive.”

“One death is enough,” said Mablung.

“I did not will it, but I do not mourn it,” said Túrin. “May Mandos judge him justly; and if he ever return to the lands of the living, may he prove wiser.”<sup>46</sup>

Thus ended Saeros of the Nandor, everything but a friend, great in prejudice toward Men among those that harbored in Beleriand in the Elder Days, at the hand of him whom he most hated; and it did not seem as though anyone really missed him.<sup>47</sup>

### **Die another way<sup>48</sup>**

I have not forgotten about the earlier versions of the story, so I am quickly rewinding the tape, back to the moment when Saeros joked around and ridiculed Túrin at the table during the party. Túrin was silent and that made Saeros insult Túrin and his mother. With that in mind, in “Of Túrin Turamath or Túrin the Hapless” in the *Quenta Silmarillion* we come across this paragraph:

Then Túrin, unwitting of his growing strength, took up a drinking vessel and cast it in Orgof's face, and he fell backwards and died, for the vessel was heavy and his face was broken. But Túrin, grown suddenly cold, looked in dismay at the blood upon the board, and knowing that he had done grievous offence he rose straightway and went from the hall without a word; and none hindered him, for the king was silent and gave no sign.<sup>49</sup>

There were no deceitful thoughts during the night nor an ambush on the next morning; no wild run through the woods, no peacemaker Mablung with his ruminations about Morgoth's vile doings behind the whole hassle, and at last no desperate leap that ended on the boulders down below, on the bottom of the stream. Instead, Thingol was present and could witness everything, and he did not move when Saeros had fallen with his mouth smashed like a watermelon. On a side note, Túrin must have indeed been of ginormous strength, not to mention that the drinking vessel must have been of the size and weight of a cannonball to smite a man to death.

Along the lines of believability, a more credible outcome regarding Saeros' fatal wounds and a more dramatic reaction of the partygoers to Túrin's deed is presented in *Turambar and the Foalókë*:

But Orgof's face was broken and he fell back with great weight, striking his head upon the stone of the floor and dragging upon him the table and all its vessels, and he spake nor prated again, for he was dead.

Then all men rose in silence, but Túrin, gazing aghast upon the body of Orgof and the spilled wine upon his hand, turned on his heel and strode into the night; and some that were akin to Orgof drew their weapons half from their sheaths, yet none struck, for the king gave no sign but stared stonily upon the body of Orgof, and very great amaze was in his face.<sup>50</sup>

In general, the earlier versions seem bereft of Saeros' ulterior motives and hate built for years in the silence of his mind. His taunting came out of jests, plus a lot of wine, took another, unfortunate direction, causing his death on the premises, and he could not plan to waylay Túrin in the morning because he was already dead.



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I wonder about the king's lack of reaction. Granted, he must have been shocked by the violence in his very presence, but he did not move. Though, if he had, he would have probably caused the second kinslaying because Túrin would not leave without the fight with those who had drawn swords against him. There is a note which Tolkien wrote on the margin of *The Lay of the Children of Húrin*, manuscript B, against the lines depicting the same moment of Túrin's leaving: "Make Orgof's kin set on him and T. fight his way out".<sup>51</sup> The body count would have certainly been higher, had not Tolkien dropped the idea.

Although, there would not have to be a trial on the next day, because there were many witnesses of Túrin's deed and among them the king himself, Thingol had to judge Túrin, in absentia because Túrin had fled. Thingol pardoned him, moreover, he paid what seemed a weregild to the kinsmen of Orgof. That concept was entirely omitted in the later versions, once Saeros was only wounded by Túrin during the party.

Tinwelint despite his grief and the ill deed pardoned him, and the most of his folk were with him in that, for Túrin had long held his peace or returned courtesy to the folly of Orgof, though stung often enough thereby, for that Elf being not a little jealous was used to barb his words; and now therefore the near kinsmen of Orgof were constrained by fear of Tinwelint and by many gifts to accept the king's doom.<sup>52</sup>

This way, at least no one dared question Thingol's judgement, as in the later version where Túrin doubted he would be judged justly because Saeros happened to be one of the king's counsellors.

## Recap

It is hard for me to say which version of Saeros' story I find better. I will not use the word 'to like' because it would be unseemly to 'like' somebody's dying this or that way. Orgof with his loose tongue and jokes seems more of a village idiot than a villain to me, and his name sounds too ominous for the case. His death – his smashed mouth – in a symbolic way seems a punishment for his having been mouthy and had no measure when to stop taunting Túrin, but it hardly seems a reason for Túrin's self-imposed outlawry. Túrin should have just waited for the king to pardon him. Saeros, with his malicious attitude and self-nurtured contempt toward the Secondborn, seems more fitting for a tale where the curse of Morgoth is a spiritus movens, and there was just nothing anyone could do about it.

To summarize this essay, which has grown surprisingly, if you remember those few sentences that Saeros does have to him in the published *Silmarillion*, I present Table 1., in which I have compiled the most important versions of the tale in what I hope is a useful, helpful manner.

Table 1. The evolution of the story of Saeros

<b>Early versions: <i>Turambar and the Foalókë, The Lay of the Children of Húrin</i></b>	<b>The published <i>Silmarillion</i></b>	<b><i>Narn i Hîn Húrin, The Children of Húrin</i></b>
Orgof	Saeros	Saeros
Ilkorin/Dark elf of an ancient tribe, with a bit of Gnomish blood; kinsman of the king (on his mother's side). Favored by the king.	Nandorin. One of the king's counsellors.	Nandorin, son of Ithilbor, friend of Daeron, settled in Menegroth after the first battle of Beleriand. One of the king's counsellors.
Good hunter with a brave heart, elf of prowess; foolish, proud, and talkative, prone to bragging about his position and to jealousy. Dislikes the race of Men, vain, and jesting.	Jealous of Túrin's favors as a fosterson to Thingol.	Proud, jealous, and vain, dislikes the race of Men, bullies Túrin envious of his favors in the court of Thingol. Treats those whom he thinks lesser, with superiority.
Jokes around the table during the feast, drinks a lot, makes fun of Túrin's ragged looks, insults the women of Hithlum.	Taunts Túrin for his ragged looks and insults his the women of Hithlum. Smashed in the mouth by Túrin with a drinking vessel, gravely hurt. Túrin flees.	Late to the party, jabs at Túrin for accidentally taking his 'accustomed' seat. Fires an insane number of questions at Túrin, concerning his life on the border, impatient for having hardly any answer, taunts Túrin ragged looks, casts a golden comb at him and insults the women of Hithlum. Smashed in the

		mouth by Túrin with a drinking vessel, challenges him to a duel outside the halls. Mablung sees Morgoth's malice in this and plays at being the voice of reason. Túrin flees. King absent.
Killed on the premises during the feast, smashed in the mouth by Túrin with a drinking vessel (golden goblet). Falls backward and hits on the stone ground, pulling along with him the table and the utensils. Túrin flees. King present, compensates to the kinsmen of Orgof after his death.	Killed in a fatal leap on the next morning, after ambushing Túrin and running in the woods. Crashed on the boulders in the ravine of a stream. Mablung present.	

Let me also quote the commentary on *Turambar and the Foalókë*, in which Christopher Tolkien analyzes the evolution of the story of Saeros and Túrin, pointing out the differences and sketching a comparative portrayal of Túrin's enemy:

While the story of Túrin and Saeros as told in *The Silmarillion*, and in far more detail in the *Narn*, goes back in essentials to the *Tale of Turambar*, there are some notable differences – the chief being that as the story was first told Túrin's tormentor was slain outright by the thrown drinking-cup. The later complications of Saeros' treacherous assault on Túrin the following day and his chase to the death ... are entirely absent, necessarily; nor does Mablung appear ... . Some details survived (as the comb which Orgof/Saeros offered tauntingly to Túrin), while others were changed or neglected (as that is with the anniversary of Túrin's departure from his home – though the figure of twelve years agrees with the later story, and that the king was present in the hall ... . But the taunt that roused Túrin to murderous rage remained essentially the same, in that it touched on his mother; and the story was never changed that Túrin came into the hall tousled and roughly clad, and that he was mocked for this by his enemy.

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Orgof is not greatly distinct from Saeros, if less developed. He was in the king's favour, proud, and jealous of Túrin; in the later story he was a Nandorin Elf while here he is an Ilkorin with some Gnomish blood ... but doubtless some peculiarity in his origin was part of the 'tradition'. In the old story he is explicitly a fop and a fool, and he is not given the motives of hatred for Túrin that are ascribed to him in the *Narn*.<sup>53</sup>

Last, but not least, let us hear what Thingol has to say upon the matter:

“Saeros I accounted faithful and wise; but if he lived he would feel my anger, for his taunting was evil, and I hold him to blame for all that chanced in the hall.”<sup>54</sup>

I would not state that better, Your Majesty.

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## Works Cited

1. *The Bible*, “Proverbs 16:18”.
2. *The Silmarillion*, “Of Túrin Turambar”.
3. Subtitle courtesy of Dawn Felagund.
4. *Tolkien Gateway* speculates that Saeros’ name may be derived from Sindarin words: ‘saer’ = *bitter*, and ‘ross’ = *rain*, which may indicate his nature and suit him well, but it is not discussed in the published *Silmarillion*.
5. *History of Middle-earth, Volume XI: The War of the Jewels. The Grey Annals*, §259.
6. *The Children of Húrin, Preface*.
7. *Ibid.*, *Appendix II*, “The Composition of the Text”.
8. *History of Middle-earth, Volume XI: The War of the Jewels. The Grey Annals*, §259.
9. *The Silmarillion*, “Of the Sindar”.
10. *History of Middle-earth, Volume V: The Lost Road and Other Writings. The Lhammas*, “Commentary on *The Lhammas*”, §7 says that Saeros would be the most notorious of the Green-elves that had passed into Doriath.
11. *The Silmarillion*, “Of Túrin Turambar”.
12. *History of Middle-earth, Volume IV: The Shaping of Middle-earth. The Quenta*, §12.
13. *History of Middle-earth, Volume V: The Lost Road and Other Writings. Quenta Silmarillion*, “Of Túrin Turamath or Túrin the Hapless”, §38.
14. Of the elves that never saw the light of Kôr.
15. *History of Middle-earth, Volume II: The Book of Lost Tales II. Turambar and the Foalókë*.
16. *History of Middle-earth, Volume III: The Lays of Beleriand. The Lay of the Children of Húrin*, “Túrin’s Fostering”; verses 448-460.
17. *Ibid.*, verses 430-433.
18. *The Silmarillion*, “Of Túrin Turambar”.
19. *The Silmarillion*, “Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor”.
20. *History of Middle-earth, Volume XI: The War of the Jewels. The Grey Annals*, “Commentary on *The Grey Annals*”, §38 says: “The chief of the ‘Guest-elves’, as they were called, was given a permanent place in Thingol’s council”; and Saeros was “the son of the chief of the Guest-elves, and had been for a long time resident in Menegroth”.
21. *Unfinished Tales. Narn i Hîn Húrin*, Footnote 8 claims that in other versions of the narrative Saeros was Daeon’s kinsman or even brother.
22. *Unfinished Tales. Narn i Hîn Húrin*, “Túrin in Doriath”.
23. There is an interesting note on Saeros in the linguistic deliberations in *History of Middle-earth, Volume XI: The War of the Jewels. Quendi and Eldar*, “Author’s Notes to Quendi and Eldar”, Note 9: “Maeglin was indeed an Elf of evil temper and dark mind, and he had a lust and grudge of his own to satisfy; but even so he did what he did only after torment and under a cloud of fear. Some of the Nandor, who were allowed to be Celbin [roughly a Sindarin equivalent of the Quenyan ‘Calaquendi’], were not any better. Saeros, a counsellor of King Thingol, who belonged to a small clan of Nandor living in eastern Doriath, was chiefly responsible for the driving into outlawry of Túrin son of Húrin. Túrin’s mother was named Morwen ‘dark maiden’, because of her dark hair, and it was one of Saeros’ worst insults to call her Morben [roughly a Sindarin equivalent of the Quenyan ‘Moriquende’]. For that Túrin smote him in the king’s hall.” So in fact, Saeros insulted her using a name of what he had once been.
24. *The Children of Húrin*, “Túrin in Doriath”.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Unfinished Tales. Narn i Hîn Húrin*, “Túrin in Doriath”.

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27. From "I Don't Want to Spoil the Party" by The Beatles.
  28. *History of Middle-earth, Volume III: The Lays of Beleriand. The Lay of the Children of Húrin*, "Túrin's Fostering", verses 413-428.
  29. *Ibid.*, verses 461-468.
  30. *History of Middle-earth, Volume II: The Book of Lost Tales II. Turambar and the Foalókë*.
  31. Earlier versions of the tale make Túrin nineteen years old at that time and even more meaningfully make him come back to Menegroth and subsequently kill Saeros on the twelfth anniversary of his leaving home.
  32. *The Children of Húrin*, "Túrin in Doriath".
  33. *Ibid.*
  34. *Ibid.*
  35. *Ibid.*
  36. *Ibid.*
  37. *Ibid.* In *History of Middle-earth, Volume X: Myths Transformed*, Note 2 it is proposed that Túrin should think of those words of Saeros when he finds Níniel in the woods of Brethil.
  38. Wild man of the woods.
  39. *Unfinished Tales. Narn i Hîn Húrin*, "Túrin in Doriath".
  40. *Ibid.*
  41. Cpl. Dwayne Hicks' quote from James Cameron's *Aliens* (1986).
  42. *The Silmarillion*, "Of Túrin Turambar".
  43. *Unfinished Tales. Narn i Hîn Húrin*, "Túrin in Doriath" says: "One only was mightier in arms among the march-wardens of Thingol at that time than Túrin, and that was Beleg Cúthalion".
  44. *The Children of Húrin*, "Túrin in Doriath".
  45. *Ibid.*
  46. *Ibid.*
  47. This is my poor attempt at travesting the famous epitaph of Beleg Cúthalion from *The Silmarillion*, "Of Túrin Turambar" and *The Children of Húrin*, "The Death of Beleg": "Thus ended Beleg Strongbow, truest of friends, greatest in skill of all that harboured in the woods of Beleriand in the Elder Days, at the hand of him whom he most loved; and that grief was graven on the face of Túrin and never faded."
  48. My travesty of the title of the 20th James Bond movie *Die Another Day* (2002, directed by Lee Tamahori).
  49. *History of Middle-earth, Volume V: The Lost Road and Other Writings. Quenta Silmarillion*, "Of Túrin Turamath or Túrin the Hapless", §40.
  50. *History of Middle-earth, Volume II: The Book of Lost Tales II. Turambar and the Foalókë*.
  51. *History of Middle-earth, Volume III: The Lays of Beleriand: The Lay of the Children of Húrin*, "Notes".
  52. *History of Middle-earth, Volume II: The Book of Lost Tales II. Turambar and the Foalókë*.
  53. *Ibid.*, "Commentary on the *Tale of Turambar*", §1.
  54. *The Children of Húrin*, "Túrin in Doriath".
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## **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.