
Character Biography

Thingol

By Oshun

Elu Thingol is one of the three elves, along with Ingwë and Finwë, chosen by Oromë to go to Valinor. There, as leader of their people, they were to meet with the Valar and view the splendor of the West under the light of the Trees. The elven emissaries then returned to Cuiviénen, with instructions to advise their people to heed the summons of the Valar, abandon their homeland and come to the land of the Valar.

The names Elu Thingol (in Sindarin) and Elwë Singollo (in Quenya) have the same meaning in both languages: Elu or Elwë signifying *star-man* and Thingol or Singollo translated as *grey cloak*. Since Thingol was said to have siblings, Olwë and Elmo, it would seem that he was not one of the original, unbegotten elves, who awakened at Cuiviénen, but would have more likely been among the first generation of elves to be born.

When Thingol returned from Valinor to Middle-earth, he was able to convince many of the elves, who were to compose the third and largest contingent of the Firstborn, the Teleri (“...the Sindar they were named, the Grey-elves, the elves of the Twilight,” *Quenta Silmarillion*, “Of Thingol and Melian”), which he would lead, along his brother Olwë, on the long trek westward across Middle-earth from Cuiviénen to the sea. There they were to receive aid in crossing over to Aman. Uniquely among the Sindar, Thingol is considered to be of the Calaquendi, due to having seen the light of the Trees in Valinor. He is described in superlative adjectives throughout the passages referencing him in *The Silmarillion*, such as: “. . . fair and noble as he had been, now he appeared as it were a lord of the Maiar, his hair as grey silver, tallest of all the Children of Ilúvatar; and a high doom was before him” (*Quenta Silmarillion*, “Of Eldamar and the Princes of the Eldalië.”).

However, before Thingol and his people had reached the western coast of Middle-earth, Thingol met Melian the Maia in the woods of Nan Elmoth. In one of the more hyperbolic and fantastic love affairs in Tolkien’s legendarium, Thingol and Melian are so smitten with one another, that Thingol completely forgets about his business at hand of leading the largest host of elves to the land of the Valar. The leader of the Sindar and his Maian lover spend long centuries simply holding hands and gazing into one another’s eyes. The most pragmatic among the readers of *The Silmarillion* might want to believe that a bit more than simply holding hands must have occurred during that interlude. Nevertheless, the outcome would remain the same. Many of Teleri would eventually continue to Valinor, led by Thingol’s brother, Olwë, while a larger number refused to leave without their king and remained behind in Middle-earth.

Thingol and Melian went on to found, in the central part of Beleriand, the protected realm of Doriath, whence he ruled the remaining Sindar. Immediately before the beginning of the First Age and the arrival of the Noldor in Middle-earth, Thingol proved himself to be a formidable warrior. Along with Círdan and the elves of the Falas, Thingol participated in the First Battle of the Wars of Beleriand as the leader of the troops from Doriath. Together, they managed to defend both Doriath and the Falas, but were forced to leave Morgoth’s minions to essentially

roam freely throughout the larger part of Beleriand until the advent of the exiled Noldor. Thingol, with the aid of the Girdle of Melian, magical protective Mists, and a military organization of marchwardens, sequestered his people in Doriath. Thingol's construction of the impressive and extensive cavern fortress and city of Menegroth, also called the Thousand Caves, would later inspire Finrod in his design of Nargothrond.

The arrival of the returning Noldor in Middle-earth aroused Thingol's suspicions and he sought to reaffirm his kingship over Beleriand and its people. "In Hithlum the Noldor have leave to dwell, and in the highlands of Dorthonion, and in the lands east of Doriath that are empty and wild . . . I am the Lord of Beleriand, and all who seek to dwell there shall hear my word" (*Quenta Silmarillion*, "Of the Return of the Noldor").

However, Thingol had initially first welcomed the children of Finarfin into Doriath, as grandchildren of his brother Olwë. Meanwhile, Galadriel and Finrod, following an initial visit to Thingol's isolated kingdom by their brother Angrod, came to Doriath where Galadriel was to eventually stay for an extended period of time to learn what she could of Melian the Maia. There, Galadriel fell in love with and was courted by Celeborn, a prince of Doriath and close kinsman of Thingol. Already gifted among the Noldor, Galadriel was to become, by the Second Age, with the knowledge she gained from Melian and her connection to the Sindar through her marriage to Celeborn, both in terms of elven magic and political fortuitousness, perhaps the strongest elf remaining in Middle-earth.

When Thingol finally heard, through Cirdan, reports of the kinslaying at Alqualondë, already deeply mistrustful of the exiled Noldor, Thingol declared his complete antipathy for them. When Thingol confronted Finrod with Círdan's account, the noble Finrod remained silent, unable to excuse his family's role in the rebellion of the Noldor by blaming others alone for the resultant kinslaying. Finrod's brother, Angrod, apparently less meticulous in his conscience, let slip the entire story. Thingol did eventually pardon Finarfin's family, but he, nonetheless, stuck by his famous ban against the usage of Quenya, the tongue of the Noldor, within his realm: "All the Sindar shall hear my command that they shall neither speak with the tongue of the Noldor nor answer to it. And all such as use it shall be held slayers of kin and betrayers of kin unrepentant" (*Quenta Silmarillion*, "Of the Noldor in Beleriand").

One of the biggest stories in Tolkien's legendarium, of course, is the romance of Lúthien the daughter of Thingol, who is described as the most beautiful of all the Firstborn, and Beren, a Man of the House of Bëor. It was Lúthien's entanglement with Beren and Thingol's intervention in their relationship that would lead Thingol to his ultimate doom. When Beren declared his love for Lúthien, Thingol, against the advice of Melian, demanded nothing less than a Silmaril from the crown of Morgoth as a bride price for his daughter.

Undoubtedly, Thingol believed that the task he had set for Beren would be impossible to complete. Beren and Lúthien together eventually succeeded in acquiring the Silmaril. The price, however, was inestimable. Both the great Finrod and Huan the Hound, given to Fëanor's son Celegorm by Oromë, died in aiding and protecting Beren and Lúthien. Nor did the tragic consequences of Thingol's lust for the Silmaril end there.

Once Thingol took possession of the Silmaril he became enthralled by it and jealous of it. Thingol commissioned the Dwarves of Nogrod to set the jewel in the famed Dwarven necklace, the Nauglamír. The lure of the Silmaril also ensnared the Dwarven craftsmen who demanded

the Nauglamir in payment for their work, an obvious ploy to acquire the Silmaril. When Thingol refused to give it to the Dwarves, their lust for the Silmaril led them to murder Thingol to acquire it.

The events that followed led inevitably to Doriath's destruction and the scattering of Thingol's once-sheltered people. Desperate in her grief at Thingol's death, Melian abandoned Middle-earth to return to Aman as a Maia. The Silmaril eventually reverted again to the possession of Beren and Lúthien, where it remained until they left it to their son and heir Dior. His refusal to hand it over to the sons of Fëanor resulted in the Second Kinslaying, in which Dior was killed. One final attempt to secure this same Silmaril provoked the Third Kinslaying, the attack upon the Mouths of Sirion, where Dior's daughter Elwing held the coveted stone. The Silmaril once held by Thingol was delivered by Elwing to her husband Eärendil, who wore it aboard the ship Vingilot, whence it appeared as a shining star in the night sky, and brought again close to Middle-earth by Eärendil lighting the battlefield during the War of Wrath.

Although the events surrounding the Doom of Elu Thingol would seem to have been completed by the end of the First Age, the line of descent from Thingol extended through and beyond the Third Age. Those descendants included Elrond and Elros, and, through them, extended to both Arwen and Aragorn, among others.

About the Author

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