

Companions

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Companions

by [Zdenka](#)

Summary

Haleth and those who followed her. (Two drabble sequences and a 250-word fixed-length ficlet.)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

Written for the fellowship set of prompts at [tolkien_weekly](#): ally, companion, comrade, friend, mate. I wrote this set of drabbles a couple years ago and posted them to the [tolkien_weekly](#) LJ comm, but it seems I never posted them to AO3.

Two Divided (Companion)

They were constant companions: twin brother and sister, brought into the world together. Seldom did you see Haleth without Haldar or Haldar without Haleth.

The Orcs have changed that within a few breaths. Haldar saw it first, the cruel treatment of their father's body. With a defiant shout, he vaulted from the top of the stockade.

"Let us go after them," old Gelmas urges, gripping his sword. "We will bring them back, your father and brother both."

"No," Haleth says, her face like stone. "I will spend no more lives to rescue the dead. My care is for the living."

The Protection of the Eldar (Comrade)

As the Elf-lord rides back to his guards, Ildis goes to Haleth's side. "What did he say?"

"He offers us friendship and protection, if we take him as lord."

Ildis could not take her eyes off the two while they spoke: the Elf, made even taller by his horse's height and too arrogant to dismount, and Haleth, weary and wounded but facing him proudly as a queen. "Will you accept?"

"No," Haleth answers immediately. "I will leave these lands—alone, if need be."

"I will go as your comrade," Ildis promises. "But I think I am not the only one."

To the West (Ally)

"Should we accept the Elf-lord's offer?" one of them says doubtfully. "His people are strong. They would be mighty allies."

“We need no allies,” Haleth says, standing tall and straight in their midst. “We will defend ourselves and live by our own laws, as we have always done.”

“How?” another man says bitterly. “Will we crouch here in this stockade until the Orcs return?”

“We go west,” Haleth says with certainty. “There are still lands where we can live in safety.”

It is a soft murmur at first, but rising in strength: “Haleth. Haleth, lead us. We will follow you.”

Offered Comfort (Friend)

“They will not think less of you if you grieve for your father and brother,” Ildis says softly. They have paused for a brief rest. Haleth sits apart from the others, her back leaning against a tree.

Haleth shakes her head. “I am better this way, as long as there is something to do.”

Ildis hesitates, then kneels beside her. “As you will, Haleth. Yet do not hold yourself too much apart. It is not forbidden for a chief to seek comfort from a friend.”

Haleth’s face does not soften, but she reaches for Ildis’s hand. Their fingers twine together.

Two Together (Mate)

“They are saying you should marry,” Ildis says cautiously.

Haleth laughs. “Am I in need of a husband’s counsel?”

“For the sake of an heir . . .”

“Let my nephew be chief after me—or any man or woman with good sense. The headship of our people is not an heirloom that must pass from father to son. And I am not a lost glove that needs a mate.” She reaches for Ildis’s hand, a familiar gesture. “While I have a friend—”

Ildis dares to say, “I am your friend, or anything you ask of me.”

And Haleth leans to kiss her.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Written for the femslashficlets Language of Flowers prompt table challenge: dahlia, meaning "commitment to another person or an ideal."

After the first attack of giant spiders, there was murmuring among the Haladin, some asking if they should go back to safer lands. Haleth said only, "We go on." The murmurs died in the face of her certainty.

Haleth saw the wounded tended to and ordered fires lit— "Better to see what's coming at us, even if it risks drawing more of them—" and stood alone at the edge of the circle, looking outward.

Ildis went to her with water and a clean cloth. "Let me clean that," she said with a nod at the scratch along Haleth's arm, gotten from a particularly formidable briar. "The plants could be poisonous here also." Haleth silently held out her arm.

Ildis gently pulled back Haleth's tattered sleeve. As always, she felt her heart beating faster at Haleth's closeness, from touching her skin even briefly. Even in worn clothing, tired and dirty, with strands of brown hair coming loose from her braids, Haleth was magnificent. She could never be otherwise. Ildis longed foolishly to touch those braids, to lean closer and rest her face against Haleth's shoulder.

Haleth did not seem to notice her distraction. Better if she did not—as chief, Haleth would have to wed, soon or late—and what hope did Ildis have of drawing Haleth's eye? She ignored the familiar ache in her chest at the thought and carried out her task without allowing herself to linger. *Yet I will follow you, Haleth Haldad's daughter, until death takes me.*

Chapter 3

Negotiations

Haleth faces another Elf-lord, this one golden-haired instead of dark. “Thingol, king of Doriath, rules these lands,” he explains earnestly. “He is uneasy about having Men settled in Brethil, but I have told him—”

“We will not bow to any lord,” Haleth says. “We rule ourselves.” Her spear-women stand in a ring behind her. Those who have followed Haleth this far will not waver.

“And if he does not ask for your submission and fealty, but only that you defend these lands from the Orcs?”

Haleth considers him for a long moment. “Yes,” she says at last. “That will do.”

Domestic Arrangements

“But if I move into your house,” Ildis says, “if I live with you, there will be gossip.”

“You wish it, Ildis, do you not?” Haleth’s voice is uncharacteristically gentle. She reaches over to stroke Ildis’s hair. Ildis sighs and leans against her hand.

“I wish nothing more,” she says truthfully. She captures one of Haleth’s thick brown braids in turn and twines it through her fingers, with a thrill of secret delight.

“Do you think they will question my actions?” Haleth asks mildly.

Ildis feels sudden laughter bubbling up in her chest. “No,” she says. “No, I do not.”

Ladybarrow

“I grieve to hear of it,” the golden-haired Elf says. His name is Finrod, and Haleth eventually admitted to Ildis that she found him less arrogant than the others.

“*I am weary, Ildis,*” Haleth said, she who never seemed to tire. They were seated together beneath their favorite tree, and the breeze tugged strands of hair from Haleth’s grey braids. She laid her hand on the springy moss. “*When I am gone, bury me here.*”

Ildis still cannot believe that Haleth’s indomitable spirit has left the world. “No Orc will trouble her resting-place,” she says fiercely. “They would not dare.”

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