

“Tavisaen. Listen to me. Are you listening?”

Her rough hands were folded tightly against the table in front of her. The nape of her neck was damp and warm under the weight of her cloak. Her amber eye faced forward.

Selika Roh di Plagia, Dread Lord of the Ascendant Clan, was having none of the Epicanthix's reluctant nonsense.

“You have done well,” she started, slowly, her words deliberate, “since you returned to Plagueis.”

Ronovi said nothing. She couldn't say anything. What could she say? It was Selika's turn to orate.

“From what I can tell, you have always been a target of adversity. Regardless of where you succeed. Regardless of where you fail. You have been berated, ridiculed, and constantly denied the credibility that you believed you rightfully earned. And that has turned, ultimately, into your own self-fulfilling prophecy. You have become self-sabotaging. You have become reckless.

“And yet, you are still powerful. I've read your records: Twenty-five mighty Jedi, dead at your hands, during the Invasion of New Tython. Perhaps, at a first glance, it merely makes you a suitable killing machine. A perfect soldier. That was what you wanted, wasn't it? Perfection. Again, I don't have to be capable of reading your mind to understand your ambitions. Especially when time and time again, they have been ground under the toe of your own boot.

“I do not expect you to change as a person. Tavisaen. But I do expect you to change your perspective of what you truly can do. You find this latest call to war superfluous and unworthy of your time - many others would agree with you. But I am asking you to take part in this campaign. The mantra of this clan is to Adapt, Ascend, and Avail. You would do well to remember all three of those things.

“I know what you plan to ask me. Something along the lines of, most likely, ‘Is that an order?’ Well, maybe it is. Maybe I expect you to fight because you're just another rowdy, yet effective, addition to our military might. But it's more than that. You have much to prove to your skeptical enemies, after so many failures and so many desperate attempts to either conquer them or take vengeance on them. I am not asking you to be better than the others. I am asking you to be better than you've ever been before.

“Because you can be. And you will be. Because for the first time in a long while, I believe, you will be focused solely on the goal of improving everything that you already have, never mind the opinions of those who witness what you can or cannot accomplish.”

Her little motivational speech over, Selika turned away from Ronovi, and the Epicanthix could only guess that the whole spiel had been, perhaps, uncomfortable for her. The taller of the women rose from her chair, eyeing the Dread Lord cautiously, before the lady she was infatuated with spoke again.

“You may leave my presence...Ronovi.”

Well. Ronovi’s nostrils flared as she exited the room. That was new.