

**Extract from:**

**Assignata**

**Forged of Sand and Steel**

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# The Treaty of Kalavryta

## Opening Statement

### The Intent

*This Treaty of Kalavryta brings the Great Wars to an end.*

*By signing this treaty, the fifteen ruling men of the individual states affirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the formation of the Affinitas of Kalavryta from the individual states of Gelendost, Phalasarina, Sougia, Karpatos, Lagadia, Lividi and Ugento, the northern islands of Nasia, Dodurgalar, Gennadi and Karadere and the southern islands of Elliniko, Goynuk, Avasall and Turcalar.*

*These men confirm their desire to live in peace with all peoples across the Affinitas.*

*They are men determined to safeguard the freedom, heritage and the civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, liberty, and the rule of law.*

*They seek to promote stability, wellbeing, and prosperity of all people of the fifteen newly formed Governorates of Kalavryta. These men are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security.*

## Prologue

Soha held the small newborn boy in his arms, beaming with pride at his first son.

It had taken a long time for Yenice to fall pregnant with their second child, Alestiana, their daughter, was nearly twelve.

Yenice laboured for two days to bring the child into the world. He was a large baby, and it had caused her great pain, but she was pleased to have given Soha the son he dreamed of.

The infant started to wail as Soha held him.

Soha passed the baby back to Yenice, who took him to her breast. The wailing instantly stopped and gave way to intense guzzling.

She raised her eyes to meet her husband's gaze. She wasn't sure she had ever seen him happier. His face was so much older than when they met, the lines around his eyes and mouth deeper than they had ever been, his back hunched over from days, weeks, and years of hard work, alone on the farm. But it was all worth it, and the joy she could see on his face, the hard work and the pain of the last few days melted away for her knowing she had given him the boy that he wanted.

She had fought hard to bring that baby into the world. There was more blood than with their older daughter, and her labour lasted much longer. Still, in the end a healthy, strong boy. A boy who would serve all the lands of Kalavryta.

This boy had a destiny, Soha was determined that when the time came, he would be the one selected from Phalasarna to become Assignata. The pride of having a son serve waned in many parts of Kalavryta as memories of the horrors of the great wars faded. Soha, however, was old-fashioned, and he still saw it a great honour to be selected to become one of the few that were chosen to protect the many. Although they weren't a high-born family, it was rare now for the elite to put forward their own children. Soha would ensure that this boy, his first boy, was the strongest of his age so that he would be

selected. To have an Assignata in the family would bring respect, something that Soha desperately craved.

Yenice's family had not approved of the match, Soha could offer nothing to his name but the farm he worked, and her father objected bitterly that the marriage was beneath them. But they had not cared, they were in love, she left everything to be with him, and this boy would be the answer to winning back their acceptance.

"Send for Tekeli," she murmured, "My sister will want to see her new nephew."

"Brak" added Soha, "we will call him Brak." Yenice smiled and nodded in agreement.

"I will fetch you some water before I send for Tekeli," and Soha left the room.

He would leave it a while before carrying out her instruction. Soha didn't get on well with any of his wife's family, and Tekeli could be a mean and spiteful woman. He did not like that poison around his daughter. But he could not deny Yenice the visit, as Tekeli was the only member of her family that ever came up to the farm.

The sun was setting as he walked outside to the stone walled well in the centre of the courtyard. Fresh water from the well would be cooler than the trough water. He paused. Inhaling slowly, filling his body with the cool evening air. The fertile fields of Phalasarna stretched out

far into the east. His farm sat on top of the cliffs on the western edge of the Governorate. He turned in a circle as he wound the bucket down to the water. He could see his golden fields of corn stretch down the hillside, away from the small timber dwelling he had crafted for his family to live in. It was nothing elaborate like the houses in town, just a single storey home with two bedrooms and a kitchen, a small room adjoining the house stored the hay, and then a modest sized barn across from the well where he kept the mules.

As he turned, he stopped to look out over the cliffs and the ocean that stretched to the west. The sun reached the horizon, and it looked like it was dipping itself into the ocean, its orange rays spreading across the surface of the water like a warm embrace reaching out for him. He closed his eyes and took a large, deep breath. It felt like those sun rays were filling him up from inside as he swelled with pride.

He walked slowly back across the sandy courtyard towards the house. Inside Alestiana was preparing food in the kitchen. He smiled at her from the doorway.

“You do well, my daughter,” he said, “Your mother will be hungry when she wakes, she has not eaten since the labour started.”

Alestiana smiled back at her father “It has gone quiet in there now,” she said, “They must both be exhausted, I will cook now so it is ready when she wakes.”

Soha crossed the kitchen towards the bedroom, pausing to kiss his daughter on the top of her head as he passed. He held his lips to her dark blonde hair. She always smelled of the same lavender oil that her mother used. He inhaled it deeply before breaking away and opening the bedroom door.

Sure enough, Yenice had fallen asleep. The baby was still feeding, propped up at her chest, but her eyes were closed. He left the jug and the cup he had brought from the kitchen on the bedside table and went back to the kitchen. The smell of cooking meat, onions and potatoes was starting to spread through the rooms. His stomach rumbled.

As he walked back through the door, Alestiana was fetching bowls from above the stove.

“Your mother is sleeping,” he paused. “Let’s let her rest a while. She will eat when she wakes.”

They both sat down, tucking their wooden stools under the simple wooden table to eat, smiled and happy they both talked of the days to come.

They were halfway through the meal when the baby started crying again from the other room. Soha smiled, a

welcome sound, he thought. His smile faded to a frown when the crying did not stop. Yenice must be so deep in her sleep that the crying had not woken her.

Alestiana rose from the table, “I will fetch him so mother can continue to sleep.” And she moved through to the bedroom.

Alestiana’s cry ripped through the cabin and burst beyond with such force that the mules in the barn started to bray. The scream made Soha’s blood run cold.

He sprung up from the table so hard that his stool flew backwards across the kitchen, clattering across the stone floor.

Running to the bedroom, he burst through the door as Alestiana let out another scream. He looked wildly around the room, his eyes not being able to make sense of the scene in front of him.

The baby lay where he had rolled away from Yenice’s breast in the middle of the bed. His wife was slumped to one side, her skin grey as ash, her eyes open but rolled back in her head. Blood dripped from the bottom of the bedstead into an ever-growing pool on the stone floor.

He rushed forward, grabbed the baby, and passed it to Alestiana, who was sobbing uncontrollably.

Alestiana, not removing her eyes from her mother, took the baby helplessly from Soha. He moved his face

close to her and cupped her tear-streaked cheeks with his hands. He turned her gaze away from her lifeless mother to meet his own.

“Run,” Soha gasped desperately, “fetch the Healer.” He put his hands on her shoulders and turned her, pushing her out of the door. Once out of the room, he heard her footsteps grow in pace as she moved through the kitchen and out of the door, baby still wailing in her arms.

Soha turned back to the bed, and this time put his hands on his wife’s shoulders, pushing her upright. She was completely lifeless. He threw back the bedcovers, staggering backwards at the sight in front of him. He had never seen so much blood. It felt like his stomach had fallen to the floor, he lifted his wife’s lifeless body into his arms and called her name, trying to will some life back into her, there was no response.

He didn’t know how long he had sat there in this numbed emotional state. He was only partially aware of the world around him when the sound of a baby crying registered in the distance. The sound gradually got louder and louder until the door burst open.

The village Healer rushed into the room, his white robes billowing around him. Alestiana and Tekeli attempted to follow but when he saw the grief-stricken

man, the lifeless grey women, the blood-stained sheets, and the dark burgundy congealing pool on the floor, he gently gestured for them to stay in the kitchen and slowly closed the door behind him.

He moved slowly towards the weeping man on the bed in front of him and lightly lifted the dead woman from his arms. Soha's eyes met his, and a look of panic crossed the widow's face. He tried to grab his wife back to his chest, but the Healer eased his hands away and guided him off the bed and out of the room.

The sight of the bloodied man in front of them caused the two women waiting in the kitchen to begin to wail. Soha, in his shocked state, could not hear them, he moved past them in a daze, guided by the Healer to sit down in the wooden armchair by the fireplace. It wasn't lit, given how warm it was, but the man still stared into it as though he could see flames leaping around the hearth.

The Healer's gaze met those of the women waiting in the kitchen, and he slowly shook his head. Tekeli was now holding the baby and holding Alestiana, who was weeping into her shoulder.

"I will prepare her," stated the Healer. "Tekeli, you will need to find someone in the village who can feed that baby boy."

“Brak,” said Soha from the armchair without taking his gaze from the flameless fire, “his name is Brak.”

Tekeli looked up at the Healer, but all she could manage was a nod. No words would come out. She looked down at the baby in her arms, but it was not a look of love and caring the Healer saw. Her face was twisted into one of the most intense looks of disdain and disgust.

Knowing there was little he could do to comfort the dazed man, nor his weeping relatives, the Healer moved back to the bedside. He pressed his fingers against her neck to confirm what he already knew. No life beat beneath the skin, and she was starting to go cold.

The Healer began to clean and wash. It took until sunrise before he was done. He had cleaned the blood from the stone flags using sand to clump it together, washed the woman, put her in clean gowns, and neatened her hair. He stripped the sheets from the bed and replaced them with clean ones and cleaned all he could, but even he was not skilled enough to get the stench of death out of the room.

She looked like she was sleeping, but it was with a heavy heart that he knew she was not.

Soha and Yenice had waited so long for their second child, and he could imagine their joy when they realised it

was the boy they both wished for. For this to be the price they had to pay seemed too cruel.

He bundled up the blood-stained sheets and put them out of the window. He would burn them later, there was no value in carrying them through the kitchen for all to see.

Opening the door, he moved back through to the kitchen. Only Soha and Alestiana remained. Tekeli had obviously done as he suggested and taken the baby to the village to find another breast-feeding woman who was prepared to take a second baby.

Alestiana was looking at him with red, tear-stained eyes. Soha was staring out of the window at the sunrise. The sun's rays that had filled him with such pride yesterday seemed to burn him with grief this morning. He turned his face away, clearly not wanting to accept what the new day was to serve him.

# **The Treaty of Kalavryta**

## **Article One**

### **Principle of Rule**

*Those states named in The Intent will become known as Governorates. A single man will be named Governor for each state, selected to represent its people within the Affinitas of Kalavryta.*

*These same Governorates hereby establish a Council of Kalavryta, on which each of them shall be represented, to consider and vote on matters of importance.*

*Each Governorate, no matter its size or population, will be entitled to one vote. Governors will make themselves available to attend the capital of Gelendost to debate matters of importance.*

*The Governorates will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly relations by strengthening their individual lands, promoting the principles of this treaty to their people and prioritising trade within the Affinitas.*

*Should any Governor be found to be not acting in the best interests of the Affinitas, they will be removed by the rest of the Council and replaced.*

## **The Governorate of Lividi**

The two Assignata crawled to the top of the ridge on their bellies. Despite their size, stealth was part of their training. They had been instructed to hunt down the bandits that were pillaging Lividi and kill them.

There was screaming coming from the village below. Over the crest of the hill, they could see the small village down below. Small timber huts with thatched roofs lined either side of a dirt street. They could see villagers running from hut to hut. Most looked like farmers, dressing in simple clothes and carrying their children with them. Through narrow keen eyes they also saw men dressed in black leather trousers and dirty white shirts tied up the chest with a drawstring. Bandits.

“I count six, brother, you?” said one, his voice deep.

“I think so, how would you like to play it, brother?” responded the other.

“We don’t want them to see us and run off scared before we get the chance to kill any.” A grin spreading across the Assignata’s face.

“Agreed, meet you in the middle?”

The question was answered with a nod, and they sloped off down the hill in opposite directions.

They stayed low as they slunk down the slope to approach the village, shielding themselves behind buildings and carts.

Approaching from the west, the first Assignata turned a corner, and a scared village woman ran straight into his chest. She was almost two feet shorter than he was, she tilted her head backwards to meet his gaze. She stared at him wide eyed. All the people of Kalavryta knew what the Assignata looked like immense men, with close cropped hair, covered in thick brown leather armour embossed on the front with a tree, the symbol of the peace treaty. Long, sheathed swords strapped across his back, and golden hilts of shorter knives stuck out of the top of his brown leather boots. He had always preferred the agility of the shorter knives over the long sweeping actions needed for

the swords, unlike his brother in arms, who favoured the showmanship of the sword.

The sight of him took the woman by surprise, and she screamed, threatening to give away his position, he gestured to her to be quiet, but the panic within her wouldn't settle.

Fuck, he thought and hit her over the head just hard enough to make her collapse to the floor. Fucking stupid woman, he thought.

The scream had alerted a bandit, and the knife fighter could hear heavy footsteps approaching and a shadow emerging around the corner of the hut. He flattened himself back against the timber wall behind him and reached down silently to retrieve his knife from his boot. Standing, feet hip width apart, he steadied himself. The end of the bandit's sword came around the edge of the building first. At the first sign of an arm, the Assignata grabbed him around the wrist with a powerful grip and pulled forwards. Surprised, the bandit stumbled forward, enabling the fighter to spin round behind him. In comparison with the huge muscular Assignata, the bandit was childlike. In one smooth movement, the Assignata's other arm rose, drawing his blade cleanly across the bandit's throat. The man crumpled to the floor, blood spilling out across the sandy ground.

There was a roar from the other end of the village. He smiled, it was a roar he recognised. He burst round the side of the hut to see his brother engaged, a sword in each hand, with three bandits. Each bandit had a sword, but their movements were erratic, slashing at the air. The swordsman in the centre of the group was smiling. He spun, blocked, and parried the blows away, his agility and speed astounding. He saw his ally watching out of the corner of his eye.

“Don’t wait... to be... invited, brother!” gasped the swordsman in between his movements.

The bandits, distracted for a moment, looked over at the knife fighter leaning casually against a hut with a look of amusement on his face, the swordsman took the distraction to his advantage. He jabbed with one sword and swung with the other, impaling one bandit and opening another’s throat. Both sank to the ground, as their counterpart had, staining the same sandy ground bright red as they died.

The third bandit was now making a charge at the knife fighter, shouting, and waving his sword in the air. The fighter watched him approach, a look of confusion on his face. The screaming bandit closed in, at the last moment, the Assignata calmly angled his dagger upwards, the bandit impaled himself, spitting blood all over the leather

armour as his life left him. The knife fighter looked down at it in disgust.

“How many did you get so far, brother?” the swordsman asked, his face blood spattered but emphatic.

“Two.”

“Me too, let’s finish.” He said with a smile.

The street was deserted now, all the people had found somewhere to hide. There was a muffled scream from behind him. The two Assignata turned to see two bandits, each with a woman they had taken as hostage. The two women were weeping uncontrollably as knives pressed into their throats.

“Put down your weapons!” demanded a bandit.

The brothers glanced at each other.

“We will kill them!”

“So?” the knife fighter spat back.

With a sigh of exasperation, the knife fighter reached up, stretching his hands up to the sky, breathing out his rib cage, calming his body. He dropped his arms back to his sides and looked back at the two nervous bandits in front of him.

“We are here to kill you, not save village women. Kill them or don’t kill them, you still end up dead.” One woman started to scream. The bandit holding her used the butt of his knife to hit her around the head. She subdued.

The knife fighter stood with his hands on his hips, the swordsman next to him still had his blades drawn, they hung by his side, blood still dripping from their tips.

“Well?” the knife fighter challenged, “Have you decided?”

The bandits shuffled.

“Fuck this,” muttered the swordsman and started to walk forward.

The bandits shifted their focus to the approaching Assignata, which was just the distraction the other fighter was waiting for. He reached down with both hands, grasping the hilts of his fighting knives. In one smooth motion, he stood and, with a flick of his wrists, released the blades. They flew through the air, the bandits looking up too late to realise what was happening. The blades thudded into the right eye of the first and the left eye of the second. They slumped to the floor, leaving the hysterical woman shrieking in fear.

“Ahh...” exclaimed the swordsman with disappointment, he had closed half the distance between them. “You could have let me have one!”

The swordsman continued forward to reassure and comfort the women, now trembling on the floor, the Assignata weren't trained for their empathy, and he was clumsy with it, patting them heavily on the back. The knife

fighter rolled his eyes, walked swiftly to retrieve his knives, and then left to get the horses. They would clean up and get back to Vordonia.