



EXALTED

THIRD EDITION

KICKSTARTER PREVIEW DRAGON-BLOODED

The empire, long divided, must unite; long united, must divide. Thus it has ever been.

—Luo Guanzhong (as translated by Moss Roberts),
Romance of the Three Kingdoms

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United by blood and destiny, ten thousand dragons rule Creation. This, the Immaculate Philosophy teaches, is the natural order of things. Should it be cast into disarray, the harmony of all things will fall out of balance, chaos and calamity will beset the people, and the world will grow dark with horrors.

This document is a look ahead, highlighting some changes to the Terrestrial Exalted in **Exalted** Third Edition. The Dragon-Blooded have always been a solid, well-executed part of the Exalted setting, and so their handling in Third Edition is more a matter of emphasizing strengths, rather than a major concept overhaul. This document is presented in the voice of the developer, rather than setting voice.

THE BLESSED ISLE RENEWED

The heart of the Realm has always had a strong, vibrant presentation of its culture, fashion, and customs, dating back to First Edition's **Exalted: the Dragon-Blooded**, and this is something we're looking to preserve in EX3. On the other hand, its geography left something to be desired—its major cities failed to offer anything to really distinguish themselves from one another, and the Blessed Isle was generally regarded as a huge continent that only offered roleplaying opportunities for politics, nothing else. And even then, the political makeup of the Isle was never particularly well-defined outside of the Imperial City.

In Third Edition, the Blessed Isle is getting a facelift, both geographically and politically. The Isle's geography will be presented as Creation-in-miniature. Arid plains and badlands abound south of the Imperial Mountain, where the immensity of the Pole of Earth blocks cold, moisture-laden winds moving down from the Pole of Air; by contrast, the roots of the world are more prominent to its north, creating a series of mountainous extensions marching down toward the sea, whose passes will become invaluable as the Realm's civil war breaks into open fighting. The Isle's western coast dissolves into a welter of small islands, traditionally meditative or retirement retreats for wealthy, powerful scions of the Dynasty, which may now act as hidden stockpiles of heirloom Artifacts, or isolated training grounds for invasion forces. The western isles are the strongholds of many naval Houses with their own unique culture.

Even more vital than the Isle's geographical diversity will be the increased focus on its political landscape. The Great Houses are privately drawing down battle lines, struggling for control of important passes and roads and resources, and trying to determine who will control each mile of the Realm when the civil war erupts into the open movement of armies across the Isle. What will it mean for the fortunes of tiny, despised House Nellens if they're able to seize those precious saddleback passes across the northern face of the Isle and fortify them? What alliances could they court from mightier Houses to allow unmolested passage through those vital gaps?

CONTENDERS FOR THE THRONE

The field of contenders for the Scarlet Empress's empty throne will be much more active in Third Edition—it's certainly not a one-on-one fight between Mnemon and the Rose-black, though they remain vital actors in the upcoming civil war. A number of other Great Houses have candidates they believe would be viable candidates to rule of the Realm, while

various dark horse candidates emerge from the depths of obscurity to make their bids.

In addition to these prominent actors, the civil war will be a time of great opportunity for lesser lights... such as your players' Dragon-Blooded characters. The Scarlet Empress herself, after all, didn't gain her position by being the oldest, most powerful, or most accomplished Exalt of her day—she did it by having the competence and nerve to seize the moment when she found herself in the right place at the right time, and then rose to the challenges put before her. And at the very least, one needn't match Mnemon's political contacts or sorcerous prowess if she doesn't survive the war.

DYNASTIES OF POWER

Third Edition will be placing greater emphasis and more focused characterization on the dynasties of Dragon-Blooded power—primarily the Great Houses, but also the rarely-mentioned lesser bloodlines of the Blessed Isle, as well as the gentes of Lookshy.

This will include the introduction of bloodline-specific magic to the Dragon-Blooded—small cascades of Charms that are proprietary to specific Great Houses or gentes, having been developed by those bloodlines and which are uniquely suited to use by their scions. Of all the ideas in this document, this is the one that is most up-in-the-air, with a number of obvious issues still needing to be solved (such as mixed bloodlines, members-by-marriage, how much communicability such Charms ought to have to non-bloodline members, etc) before it can be implemented as a feature.

ELEMENTAL MAGIC

Actual conversation we had (paraphrased):

"It's always kind of sucked that if you wanted to play an Air Aspect swordsman, all your Charms were fire magic, and you couldn't do wind-slashes or anything like that, and came off as kind of a wannabe Fire Aspect."

"Well, there was Dragon-Graced Blade and Dragon-Graced Arrow and stuff, but that was just one Charm, and you can only use that format for kind of generic effects, not highly-specific ones like a long-range cutting wind slash. Long-range cutting wind doesn't translate to say, Wood. And getting a mix of elementally influenced Charms into the various Abilities would require more wordcount being allocated into the Charmset... you couldn't do that with a Charms chapter the size of the previous ones."

"Yeah."

"Wait, hold on, what am I saying? We're the ones who get to decide how big the chapters are now."

Dragon-Blooded in **Exalted** Third Edition will still use Ability-based Charms, but we're going to expand their elemental palette beyond what First or Second Edition could do, so that Abilities are not *only* encompassed by a single element. Elemental influence will usually predominate in an Ability—Sail will obviously be strongly water-influenced, and Archery by Wood—but Third Edition Dragon-Blooded will display more elemental diversity in their magic, pointing to their unity as a Terrestrial host, and providing a greater array of character style options. Botanical Crafts techniques, flame-omen Occult Charms, Brawl attacks with fists like granite, aquatic mobility Athletics Charms, and other elemental fusions will all be possible in **Exalted** Third Edition.



