

Behind the Threat: The Sith (Part 5)

Antiheroes

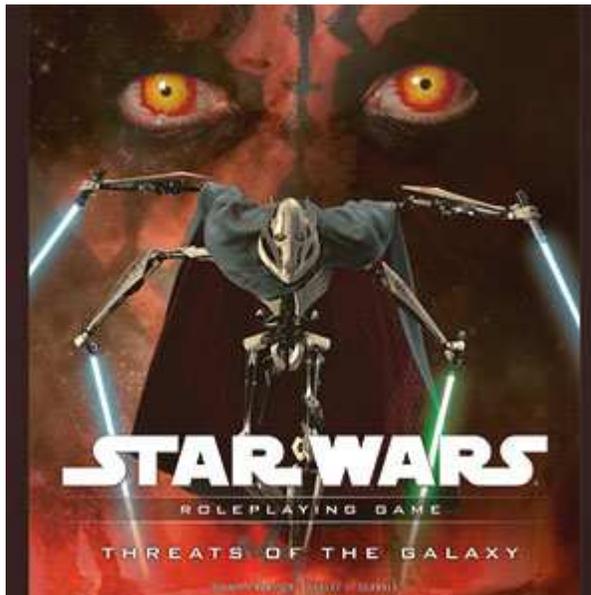
Matthew Grau

In the last several articles (see the archive below), we examined how to create a Sith character from the ground up using Saga Edition mechanics. But what if you're a Gamemaster and you want to include Sith characters in your playing group?

Your first consideration involves how many Sith you'll have in the group. Some groups might be composed of all Sith, and others might feature only one or a few Sith while the rest are characters who complement them. There are advantages and challenges to both.

All-Sith Groups

The advantage to creating all-Sith groups is they are cut from the same cloth. They are adherents to the dark side of the Force and share solidarity of philosophy and purpose. However, the danger with all-Sith groups is obvious -- in-fighting. The strongest Sith rules, and those under him will no doubt test him. Some Sith are satisfied with their place, while others constantly strive for authority.



You could agree with your group that one of them is in charge so that dissent doesn't percolate within the ranks, though such an approach is hardly realistic given Sith nature. Another option is to have the characters be equals who are under the thumb of a significantly stronger Sith. But what happens if the alpha dog is vanquished? Try to work out such concerns in advance unless you desire a group of duplicitous characters who are at each others' throats. Whether or not you like this dynamic, you should steer your players toward such behavior, even if they don't gravitate toward it themselves. It isn't optional; it's the nature of the Sith.

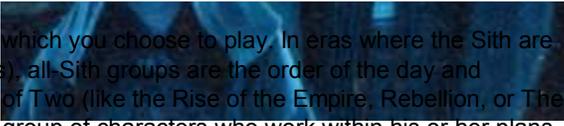
Perhaps the best way to deal with this problem is simply to strike an understanding among your players and build such competition into the plot. If your players intentionally create rivalries, with an agreement not to let them get in the way of broader gameplay, they can portray their Sith characters appropriately without obstructing the game or creating bad blood. In short, work it out and turn it into part of the story instead of leaving it to whims.

Groups With One Sith

On the other hand, the advantage to creating groups with only one or a few Sith characters is that the other characters won't typically care about whether the strongest is leading. These kind of groups can create a more harmonious dynamic, but remember, the Sith are selfish and serve themselves above all others. Because of their belief in strength and superiority, the Sith might begin to treat the other characters as lackeys and playthings. Of course, this can prove tremendously entertaining for the Gamemaster, and even the players, if the other characters would not normally choose to be in league with a Sith. How will they react once they unravel the identity of their new friend? How will they react once they come to understand that they've struck a deal with the devil in order to succeed in a mission?

Again, the best solution to these problems is to work things out ahead of time. Depending on the type of game, some characters might not mind being lackeys of the Sith -- especially if the rewards for service are significant. The Sith can promise many things that appeal to many morally questionable individuals. If the rest of the characters are unaware that they've struck a bargain with a Sith, determine how that might play out before you get there. Otherwise, it is almost guaranteed to disrupt your group and the long-term goals of the game. Building this kind of plot twist into your story will create drama instead of chaos.





The type of group you create also depends upon the era in which you choose to play. In eras where the Sith are plentiful (like the Knights of the Old Republic or Legacy eras), all-Sith groups are the order of the day and capable of operating openly. In eras dominated by the Rule of Two (like the Rise of the Empire, Rebellion, or The New Jedi Order eras), it makes sense to have one Sith in a group of characters who work within his or her plans. For example, in the Rise of the Empire or Rebellion eras, a group might consist of one Sith and several Dark Jedi or dark side Force adepts.

Group Origins

The next quandary to solve is how the character group came to be. Why are they working together? Maybe they have common goals or common enemies. How did they come together? Perhaps they had masters who were comrades, or maybe they stumbled across one another during a mission.

Adventure Hooks

Once you have your group figured out, it's time to play. In games revolving around the Sith, even more so than in other games, it's important to give the characters challenges and goals. It might be tempting to give Sith space to mess around as the dark terrors that they are, but without serious challenges and plans, they will eventually turn on each other in boredom.

In eras where the Rule of Two is predominant, you will have to create adventures in which the Sith play it safe and have long-reaching goals. The other trick here is to create such adventures in a way that does not violate *Star Wars* canon. In eras where the Sith dominate, you can easily create adventures in such a way that the characters float from confrontation to confrontation without worry of stealth or canon.

On that note, here are a few adventure hooks to give you guidelines. The hooks are categorized by era, but some might be able to be modified to work in other eras.

Knights of the Old Republic Era

In an era dominated by the Sith, one kind of adventure revolves around the quest for the legacy of the Sith. This involves hunting down hidden places of Sith power long abandoned by the rest of the galaxy, chasing down legends to uncover lost secrets, and experimenting with forgotten and perhaps even forbidden power and alchemy.

As a specific example, your Sith characters might stumble across an ancient holocron after taking a Jedi outpost or vessel. The Jedi did not open the holocron because doing so requires opening oneself up to the dark side; instead, they hoped to bury it in their archives forever. However, your group opens the holocron and discovers the secrets within, which speak of an insignificant moon named Oricon lost now in the Outer Rim. An ancient Sith named Darth Vitus used the moon as a place to experiment with and expand his already-significant knowledge of Sith alchemy. The holocron provides hints on how to find Oricon, and the hunt is an adventure on its own. Once the moon is found, the characters face the descendents of Darth Vitus's experiments -- horrible monsters, many of which are strong in the power of the dark side. The characters might eventually find Darth Vitus's compound, in which they could uncover powerful secrets to aid them in their war against the Jedi.

Rise of the Empire Era

In an era exemplified by the Rule of Two, it will be challenging to create adventures that don't violate canon. As we know from the *Star Wars* films, Darth Sidious rules the Sith in this era, with only three apprentices that we know of -- first Darth Maul, then Darth Tyranus, then Darth Vader. However, we also know that Darth Vader had a secret apprentice, and it's possible for Sith groups in different parts of the galaxy to have reason to keep their existence a secret, even from other Sith.



As a specific example, your group could be composed of a secret Sith apprentice trained by Darth Vader to hunt the last of the remaining Jedi (effectively using the basis for the *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* video game). This kind of adventure would take place after Order 66 had been executed and the Empire had been born. Underneath the secret Sith apprentice could be a group of Dark Jedi, finally able to be out in the open under the Emperor's reign, or a group of clone troopers trained to fight such a worthy prey. This hunt begins on the trail of Sarn Vals, a Quarren Jedi Knight, whose presence was implicated after a mysterious disturbance in the Corporate Sector.

Rebellion Era

Again, this era suffers the restrictions of canon and the Rule of Two. However, a situation similar to the one proposed in the Rise of the Empire era would work just as well. The Jedi are all but gone, so a secret Sith apprentice might lead special strike teams against the Rebel Alliance. Most likely, such teams will be composed of Dark Jedi or elite Stormtroopers. You still have the option of creating groups in the fringes of the Empire that want nothing to do with the plans of Darth Sidious.

As a specific example, your group might be one of Darth Vader's pet teams, led by his secret apprentice. Since the Jedi are no longer a threat, Vader has given the group the most sensitive and distasteful missions in the Empire. Through the capture and interrogation of a Bothan spy, he has learned that the Rebellion is being aided on the distant planet of Rentean in the Outer Rim. The Human inhabitants of the planet are secretly building starfighters for the Alliance. The group is sent in to infiltrate the secret shipbuilding facility, destroy it, and teach the locals what it means to aid the enemies of the Empire -- a lesson they won't soon forget.

The New Jedi Order Era

You need clever ideas to create workable Sith adventures for this era, since canon limits it greatly. Any Sith would have to have been hidden for some time or Dark Jedi who stumbled across holocrons or something similar. Their activities must remain secret; canon shows that the Dark Lady Lumiya is the closest thing to Sith encountered in this era by the New Republic. However, Lumiya herself encounters Sith on Korriban during the Legacy era, and they most certainly would be active during the Yuuzhan Vong war.



As a specific example, your group could consist of several Sith who never subscribed to the Rule of Two but were unable to operate openly due to the enormous power and long reach of Darth Sidious. Now that he's gone, these Sith grow in power on the Outer Rim, recruiting new apprentices from among the Force-sensitive. Stealth and guile still prevail, but under the auspices of building an army that can go out into the galaxy to carve out a piece of the New Republic for a new Sith Empire.

Legacy Era

Once again, the Sith emerge *en masse* under Darth Krayt. Groups can occupy any number of roles in the new Empire and can operate openly and with authority. There is resistance to be crushed and old secrets to be unearthed.

As a specific example, your group could repeat history and be Jedi Hunters during the Sith-Imperial War. This time, however, instead of being one Sith and a group of Dark Jedi (or troopers), your group consists only of Sith characters. A Jedi conclave has been striking out against the forces of Emperor Fel and Darth Krayt from a secret hiding place, which your characters have been tasked with finding. Once they have been located, the Jedi are to be wiped out. Of course, things are rarely what they seem -- the Jedi are setting a trap.

Next Time

In the next article, we'll explore how you as a Gamemaster can effectively use the Sith as major antagonists in your adventures.

Check out the Behind the Threat archives!

[Behind the Threat: The Sith 1: Portrayal](#)

[Behind the Threat: The Sith 2: The Becoming](#)

[Behind the Threat: The Sith 3: Design](#)

[Behind the Threat: The Sith 4: The Teeth in the Darkness](#)

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About the Author

Matthew Grau has been a professional writer and intellectual property developer since the age of 17. He began his career in the adventure games industry, writing books and designing game rules for such popular titles and licenses as **Dungeons & Dragons**, *Marvel Super Heroes*, *Frank Herbert's Dune*, and *Star Trek*. In the late 90s, Matthew moved into the film and television arena. He has written scripts and directed productions for clients such as Microsoft and Nintendo, and he created and wrote the *Curiosity Cafe* television show and kick-off feature film on a first-look agreement with the Jim Henson Company. He is an award-winning screenwriter with projects currently in the Hollywood studio system.

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