Character Background Cards

Each card defines a unique character background that shapes their worldview, motivations, and potential story arcs. These backgrounds can be mixed and matched with character archetypes to create complex characters.

## **Workshop Usage Guidelines**

* Mix traits from different backgrounds
* Consider how backgrounds affect relationships
* Use stress responses for conflict scenes
* Build character arcs around pattern changes
* Consider how backgrounds shape goals
* Use conflict styles for scene dynamics

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| **1. Foster System Survivor** | |
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| **Core Traits:**  Independent, adaptable, cautious with trust | |
| **Social Style:**  Forms slow but loyal bonds, reads people well  **Under Stress:**  Withdraws, becomes self-reliant | **In Conflict:**  De-escalates first, may suddenly become defensive  **Key Patterns:**  Tests relationships, protects vulnerable others |

| **2. Corporate Whistleblower** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Independent, adaptable, cautious with trust | |
| **Social Style:**  Forms slow but loyal bonds, reads people well  **Under Stress:**  Documents everything, sees patterns | **In Conflict:**  Uses precise language, prepares evidence  **Key Patterns:**  Questions motives, builds protective networks |

| **3. War Correspondent** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Direct, resilient, truth-focused | |
| **Social Style:**  Forms quick bonds in crisis, values authenticity  **Under Stress:**  Seeks adrenaline, emotional detachment | **In Conflict:**  Unusually calm, documents situations  **Key Patterns:** Dark humor, prioritizes truth over comfort |

| **4. Former Child Prodigy** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Perfectionist, self-critical, achievement-oriented | |
| **Social Style:**  Competitive undertones, uncomfortable with praise  **Under Stress:**  Returns to practiced skills obsessively | **In Conflict:**  Uses intelligence as shield, fears public failure **Key Patterns:**  Imposter syndrome, seeks validation through excellence |

| **5. Underground Artist** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Individual, unconventional, expressive | |
| **Social Style:** Tests boundaries, values authentic connections  **Under Stress:** Creates intensely, may self-isolate | **In Conflict:** Turns disputes into art, performs rather than engages  **Key Patterns:** Questions norms, struggles with mainstream acceptance |

| **6. Reformed Criminal** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Street-smart, cautious, seeking redemption | |
| **Social Style:** Careful with trust, reads ulterior motives  **Under Stress:** Falls back on old habits, hyper-vigilant | **In Conflict:** Uses intimidation skills, tries to avoid escalation  **Key Patterns:** Balances past and present, protects new life |

| **7. Disgraced Medical Professional** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Knowledgeable, guilt-driven, helping-focused | |
| **Social Style:** Professional distance, seeks to prove worth  **Under Stress:** Over-analyzes situations, becomes clinical | **In Conflict:** Uses expertise as defense, stays procedural  **Key Patterns:** Seeks redemption through helping others |

| **8. Tech Industry Burnout** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Analytical, questioning, seeking balance | |
| **Social Style:** Direct communication, values authenticity  **Under Stress:** Systematizes problems, seeks control | **In Conflict:** Uses logic, avoids emotional arguments  **Key Patterns:** Questions progress, seeks simpler solutions |

| **9. Family Dynasty Black Sheep** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Independent, rebellious, complex identity | |
| **Social Style:** Alternates between charm and defiance  **Under Stress:** Might leverage or reject family resources | **In Conflict:** Uses social skills strategically, knows power plays  **Key Patterns:** Struggles with privilege, seeks authenticity |

| **10. Small Town Returner** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Humble, nostalgic, seeking redemption | |
| **Social Style:** Navigates old and new relationships  **Under Stress:** Might plan escape, becomes defensive | **In Conflict:** Uses local knowledge, avoids public scenes  **Key Patterns:** Balances past and present identities |

| **11. Religious Crisis Survivor** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Questioning, thoughtful, seeking meaning | |
| **Social Style:**  Careful with beliefs, respects others' faith  **Under Stress:**  Questions basic assumptions, seeks guidance | **In Conflict:**  Uses theological debate skills, avoids dogma  **Key Patterns:**  Builds new belief system, values personal truth |

| **12. Environmental Activist** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Passionate, dedicated, urgent | |
| **Social Style:**  Builds coalitions, educates others  **Under Stress:**  Becomes more extreme in views | **In Conflict:**  Uses facts and moral arguments  **Key Patterns:**  Balances hope and despair, fights burnout |

| **13. Former Government Agent** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Disciplined, secretive, strategic | |
| **Social Style:**  Maintains professional distance, observant  **Under Stress:**  Increases security, becomes paranoid | **In Conflict:**  Uses training, stays controlled  **Key Patterns:**  Questions loyalty, maintains vigilance |

| **14. Academic Exile** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Intellectual, persistent, truth-seeking | |
| **Social Style:**  Debates ideas, seeks intellectual peers  **Under Stress:** Retreats into research, becomes obsessive | **In Conflict:**  Uses academic argument style, cites sources  **Key Patterns:**  Balances truth and acceptance |

| **15. Celebrity Chef Dropout** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Perfectionist, creative, seeking authenticity | |
| **Social Style:**  Commands attention, values honest feedback  **Under Stress:**  Returns to cooking, becomes controlling | **In Conflict:**  Uses kitchen hierarchy habits, direct communication  **Key Patterns:**  Balances art and commerce |

| **16. Professional Athlete Injury** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Disciplined, competitive, adapting | |
| **Social Style:**  Team-oriented, values effort  **Under Stress:**  Pushes physical limits, becomes frustrated | **In Conflict:**  Uses competitive drive, direct confrontation  **Key Patterns:**  Redefines identity, maintains discipline |

| **17. Former Cult Member** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Cautious, observant, seeking autonomy | |
| **Social Style:**  Tests group dynamics, questions authority  **Under Stress:**  May isolate, becomes hypervigilant | **In Conflict:**  Recognizes manipulation, maintains boundaries  **Key Patterns:**  Rebuilds trust, develops independent thoughts |

| **18. Political Campaign Survivor** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:** Strategic, cynical, message-aware | |
| **Social Style:**  Networks naturally, reads angles  **Under Stress:**  Manages optics, controls narrative | **In Conflict:**  Uses media tactics, thinks of consequences  **Key Patterns:**  Balances ideals and reality |

| **19. Generational Business Inheritor** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Traditional, responsible, legacy-conscious | |
| **Social Style:**  Maintains hierarchy, values loyalty  **Under Stress:**  Falls back on tradition, becomes controlling | **In Conflict:**  Uses business tactics, considers long-term impact  **Key Patterns:**  Balances innovation and tradition |

| **20. International Adoption Returnee** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Traits:**  Adaptable, observant, identity-seeking | |
| **Social Style:**  Bridges cultures, sensitive to differences  **Under Stress:**  Code-switches, seeks belonging | **In Conflict:**  Uses cultural understanding, mediates  **Key Patterns:**  Integrates identities, builds chosen family |

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