

# Character Autopsy Worksheet

A guided writing resource for building emotionally layered, memorable characters

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Strong characters are more than archetypes. This worksheet is designed to help writers dig beneath the surface and uncover the emotional contradictions, motivations, fears, and behaviors that make fictional people feel real.

## 1. Basic Identification

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- Character Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Archetype: \_\_\_\_\_
- Story Role: \_\_\_\_\_
- Core Personality Traits: \_\_\_\_\_
- Public Persona vs. Private Self: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Why Readers Would Love Them

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- What makes this character emotionally compelling?
- What vulnerability makes them relatable?
- What quality makes readers root for them?
- What contradiction makes them feel human?

## 3. Potential Weaknesses

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- Too perfect
- Too edgy
- No consequences
- Quirk overload
- Trauma without depth
- Humor replacing personality
- Emotionally repetitive
- Motivation too vague
- Which of these dangers applies most to your character? Why?

## 4. Emotional Core

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- Biggest fear: \_\_\_\_\_
- Biggest lie they believe about themselves: \_\_\_\_\_
- What do they want most? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do they actually need? \_\_\_\_\_
- What emotional wound still affects them? \_\_\_\_\_
- What would break them emotionally? \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Character Stress Test

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- How do they react when they're embarrassed?
- How do they react when they fail publicly?

- How do they react when someone betrays them?
- How do they react when they lose control?
- How do they react when someone they love gets hurt?
- How do they react when forced to choose between two bad options?

## 6. Dialogue & Behavior

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- Speech habits or repeated phrases: \_\_\_\_\_
- Defensive behaviors: \_\_\_\_\_
- What topics do they avoid discussing? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do they notice first about people? \_\_\_\_\_
- How do they behave when angry? \_\_\_\_\_
- How do they behave when afraid? \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Final Diagnosis

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- What currently works best about this character?
  - What feels weakest or underdeveloped?
  - What emotional layer needs more depth?
  - What single scene would instantly reveal who they truly are?
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*“Characters become memorable when readers recognize pieces of themselves inside the chaos.”*

