

# INTRODUCTION

A character background details the significant events, people, and life experiences that make up the origin story of a character prior to his or her role in the saga of a campaign. Some characters are born under extraordinary circumstances, heralded by prophecy and omen; others live completely ordinary lives until some dramatic event casts them onto the dangerous roads traveled by heroes and monsters. A character's background forms the basis for complex motivations and emotional vulnerabilities, and these past experiences guide the way the character responds to circumstances in his or her present life. As the child of a goddess and a mortal, do you view ordinary creatures as inferior beings? Having grown up in abject poverty, how do you react when someone steals from you? If a militant theocracy burned your siblings as heretics, how do you respond to clerics of other religions? When playing a new character, the details in your background give you a quick handle on your past, making it easier to slip into the character's skin and embrace this mind-set in play. As the campaign proceeds, your early adventures gradually become part of that background—a seamless chain of events that make up your life and contribute to your constantly changing and evolving persona.

## HOW TO CREATE A BACKGROUND

There are several ways you can approach character background using *Ultimate Campaign*. One approach is an organic method—brainstorming character details, guided by the questions in the following sections of this chapter. Alternatively, you might use the background generator, starting on page 16 to compile your history randomly. You can also use the charts and tables in the background generator as a springboard for your imagination, deliberately selecting background elements that inspire you or fit the direction you wish to explore.

For published Pathfinder Adventure Paths, you often have the option of selecting campaign traits that tie your character thematically into a specific storyline relevant to that Adventure Path. Check with your GM to see if she can point you to official campaign traits or other traits that may help link your character to the campaign or adventure she's running. Such traits provide a good foundation upon which you can add details from this book, either by rolling randomly or by manually selecting background details that mesh well with your campaign's themes.

No matter how you go about developing your character's background, the next step is to quantify that background in terms of game mechanics. Select two traits (or three traits and a drawback) that capture the background you imagined. Traits and drawbacks begin on page 51. These traits provide small bonuses that reflect skills and knowledge gained from your life experiences. The drawback, if you choose to take one, represents an emotional vulnerability or character flaw that should not only provide a slight

mechanical disadvantage, but also (more importantly) serve as a roleplaying tool for making interesting choices. After all, nobody's perfect!

## Brainstorming Your Background

Before you start working on your background, roll your ability scores and select your race and class. With this basic information determined, you can focus on creating a backstory consistent with those key elements, brainstorming the details of your background in a way that makes sense with your race, class, and attributes.

The following sections of this chapter examine your life leading up to the beginning of the campaign, starting from your birth, proceeding through the formative experiences of childhood and adolescence, and ending with the development of your worldview in early adulthood. Each section poses a number of questions to consider. You don't need to know the answers to *all* of these questions, and some things you might prefer to discover as the game proceeds. However, you may find it easier to step into your character's head if you spend some time contemplating these questions, simply because you'll have more information to draw from. These questions are prompts to focus your imagination toward certain points in your life in order to create strong roleplaying and story hooks for you, your group, and your GM.

## Creating a Unique Character Concept

Sometimes, creating a character that feels original and stands out from others of the same class and race can seem like a challenge. It's easy to fall into playing the stereotype of a race or class—the ale-swilling dwarven fighter with the battleaxe, the quick and wise elven ranger roaming the woodlands with a longbow, the sneaky and childlike halfling rogue, and so on. While there's nothing wrong with these, and they can be a lot of fun—after all, there's a reason they became cultural archetypes in the first place—sometimes you want to try something new. Presented here are some techniques you can use to help you break away from stereotypes.

**Originality:** If you strive too hard to be original, you'll likely be disappointed when you discover that someone else has already implemented your idea in a book, film, game, or other kind of media. Yet, while original *ideas* are hard to come by, every *person* you meet is unique, shaped by his or her individual experiences. Rather than strive for an original concept, try focusing on the experiences that define your character's life and give him his personality and point of view. Specific experiences will help move you away from the stereotypical and cliché.

**The Third Idea:** When you're brainstorming ideas, it sometimes helps to reject the first and second ideas that leap to mind, and instead consider the third, fourth, and fifth ideas you come up with. This way, you're challenging yourself to explore wider, more interesting possibilities full of unexplored story potential. The easy ideas that



spring to mind first probably do so because you've seen them before.

**Opposites:** When you're stuck on an characteristic that strikes you as boring, plain, or stereotypical, decide that the opposite is instead true of yourself. For instance, if you're playing the aforementioned dwarven fighter, perhaps one of the following holds:

- You have taken a vow against drinking, can't hold your liquor, or act in a peculiar, eccentric way when drunk.
- You can't grow a beard.
- You favor a weapon that is not a hammer, axe, crossbow, or other typical dwarven weapon.
- You live in a forest or on an island rather than in the hills and mountains favored by most dwarves.
- You are a pacifist who loathes violence.
- You deeply pity or love orcs and goblins.

Any one of these character quirks can prove ripe for character development and story hooks in the campaign.

**Steal Shamelessly:** Sometimes when starting a new character, you just need a good template or foundation from which to build. Characters from literature, comics, history, real life, or television and film can provide that foundation in an instant. The key is to alter various aspects of the model character until you have changed enough to have an altogether different concept.

How would Count Dracula be different as an elven wizard? What about as a halfling cleric? Are you obsessed with feasting on blood, or are you simply ancient, creepy, solitary, and mysterious?

What about reinterpreting Julius Caesar as a human rogue or a gnome illusionist? Is this human rogue one of three mobsters scheming to eliminate the competition and rule a city the way Caesar eliminated his competitors to rule Rome? Has your gnome illusionist received a prophetic message predicting his own death, as Caesar did from the soothsayer?

Building on the foundations of established characters or people gives you a framework, at which point you just need to give yourself different circumstances in order to inspire a new idea, one that will grow on its own as you continue to play. The initial inspiration or model you choose helps you come to grips with your character quickly without feeling like you have to reinvent the wheel.

Another way to accomplish this is to combine notable traits of two disparate characters from media or history. For instance, how would you play a character with Sherlock Holmes' skill at deduction and Hamlet's indecision? Achilles' battle prowess paired with Nikola Tesla's inventive mind? Merlin's magic with Marie Curie's search for scientific truth? Joan of Arc's faithful conviction and Napoleon's overwhelming ambition?

## USING THIS SECTION

The rest of this section dives deep into your background, starting from birth and early childhood through adolescence and into early adulthood. Each bit has a

number of questions to think (or write) about. As you go through them, you might find a question doesn't apply to you. That's an opportunity to instead think about why it doesn't apply, and what that means about your relationship to the rest of the world. Likewise, if you find you have a short answer to a question, especially "yes" or "no," that's an opportunity to dig deeper into why that's the case.

Above all, don't let creating a background become a burden for you. The goal is to help you play a character, not to paralyze you with decisions you don't want to make right now.

## EARLY LIFE

Experiences in childhood have a monumental impact on the person you become later in life. Family, social class, region, family trade or profession, religion, culture, and major events that occur during your life have a formative influence on your character development and the worldview that you adopt as an adult. As you think about your early life, consider the following questions and imagine your roots in a time long before you gained the knack for the character class you have chosen—after all, almost nobody starts life with their future profession already laid out for them. This information will influence your choice of skills, traits, story feats, and penalties, and help to ground you in the campaign world.

## Circumstances of Birth

Though not all characters are born under unusual circumstances, many cultures have myths of momentous events corresponding with the birth of heroes or villains. Sometimes these are natural phenomena, such as comets, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, eclipses, or shooting stars. In other instances they are social, political, or religious events such as the crowning of a king or the martyrdom of a prophet. Without precise, convenient calendars in every home, years and eras tend to be remembered for the notable events that transpired within their term, and a character whose birth falls close to a major event may always be associated with that event in the eyes of kin and peers.

Were there any special or magical circumstances that occurred around your birth? Were you born with a special birthmark, or prophesied in ancient texts? Was your birth cursed or blessed by a supernatural being? Imagine the day or year you were born—your parents likely remember it and have described it to you. In what season were you born? Was there a natural phenomenon, such as a great storm or snowfall, an earthquake, or an eclipse? Was it unseasonably warm or mild? Perhaps there was a special event that happened on the day or year of your birth—for example, maybe the local lord held a grand festival, or someone of great fame or significance passed away. Anyone in your community who remembers your birth remembers it for what else occurred in this time. This doesn't need to be a world-shaking event, but it should say something







about you and give a hint as to the events that presaged your coming into the world—for good or ill.

### Family

Your family often has the strongest influence over you as a child. This family doesn't always consist of blood relations, especially in the case of adoptees, foundlings, orphans, or street urchins. Those who raised you as a child and took responsibility for your survival, food, shelter, and protection are your family. A family passes on customs, traditions, religion, and superstitions. Some families nurture, shelter, and safeguard their children; others fight and harm one another. When you start thinking about your background, begin by examining your family life.

**Parents:** The way parents relate to one another often becomes the model for how their children perceive adult relationships. Children carry these views into adolescence and adulthood, consciously or unconsciously embracing their parents' model (even if they later reject it). The way you behave in a romantic relationship (or marriage contract) partly stems from your perception of your parents' relationship.

Who were your parents and how did they meet? Did your parents marry, and if so did they marry for love, money, political power, or some other reason? Was their marriage arranged? Did your parents fight or abuse

one another? Conversely, did your parents get along blissfully, creating an ideal model of love in your mind? Were your parents faithful to one another, or was one (or both) a philanderer? What secrets did you learn about one of your parents that the other did not know? Did your parents separate? Did a parent die? If you grew up with only one parent, how did your other parent deal with the separation from his or her partner? How did (or would) such an event affect your life? Does your family experience cause you to long for a family of your own or cause you to shun the thought?

**Siblings:** Depending on the nature of your family, your siblings might be your closest friends or worst enemies. Sometimes siblings band together for friendship, protection, and support; other times they are divided by competition, favoritism, or resentment.

Think about the family dynamics. If you have siblings, are you close to them? Were you bullied by one or more of your siblings, or protected by them? Were you the eldest child in your family, or otherwise responsible for watching out for your siblings? Did your parents place greater duties, expectations, and responsibilities upon you than upon your siblings? Is there a sibling you are closer to than others, or do you care for all your brothers and sisters equally? Was there a favorite child in your family? Were you that child or was it one of your siblings? Was there a black sheep in your



family? Do you have any bastard siblings, half-siblings, or stepsiblings? If so, what is the nature of your relationship?

**Extended Family:** Grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins can sometimes be closer than your immediate relations. At the very least, such relatives can be close confidantes outside of your immediate family. Did you have such a favorite relative? What role did this person play in your life, and what family role did she fulfill? Did your immediate family live with, visit, or associate with your extended family, or was your mother or father disowned by his or her side of the family?

**Adoption, Illegitimacy, and Orphanhood:** Growing up adopted, separated from your parents, as an illegitimate child, or on your own as an orphan may have a large effect on your mind-set, prompting questions of identity, driving you to establish yourself in the world, or plaguing you with questions about the circumstances of your birth.

Were you born of two committed parents, the result of a chance tryst, or something else? Were you reared by your birth parents or by someone else, and was that better or worse than the alternative? Did parents of a different race (including wild beasts or monsters) bring you up?

**Parents' Professions:** Your parents' professions were a backdrop against the environment you grew up in, and it's likely you were assigned tasks and chores related to their trades, and expected to learn associated skills.

What were your parents' professions? Did either of them originally come from a different background or profession? Do you have positive or negative feelings about the family trades? Did you assist your parents, or separate yourself from their trades completely? If you helped with a parent's profession, did you learn the skills of the trade when you came of age? Were you expected to carry on that trade, or did the duty fall to one of your siblings? Was there something about the trade that you loved or hated?

## Region

Imagine the geographical region where you grew up, and consider the implications, positive and negative, of growing up there. Think of how the landscape affected your psychology. If you grew up surrounded by desert, did you see it as a barren and featureless wasteland or a wide-open place of endless possibility? If you grew up near a forest, was it a verdant woodland that captivated your imagination or a savage and dangerous place where wild beasts hunted?

The environment around your community could also have influenced your physique and the skills you learned. Were you rugged mountain-folk, wandering forest nomads, peasant villagers, townfolk, city-dwellers, or the sailors from distant islands? Did you learn to survive by gathering roots and vegetables from fields and plains, or track and hunt in the quiet forests? Did you live by your wits in a city's streets and alleyways?

If you grew up near wetlands, rivers, or swamps, you might know how to fish or raft. In the mountains, you

might have developed skill with climbing or skiing. If you grew up in an urban environment and lived your entire childhood within the city walls, what is your perception of the world beyond the city?

Where you grew up also shapes how you see the rest of the world, in varying ways. There's a big difference between a country girl who sees cities with contempt or curiosity and a city boy who looks at the wilderness with wonder or fear.

## Social Rank and Education

In most cultures, the wealthy and privileged stand apart from the common masses. But even the wealthy and powerful have a hierarchy, as do middle class tradespeople and common laborers. The social class to which you belonged as a child influences your education and how you see the world.

If you are of noble birth, you might have grown used to convenience and to commanding others—and expecting them to obey, just as you're expected to obey your betters. You likely had a better education than nearly everyone else.

If you are of common birth, you probably have a very different perception of life, and little if any formal education. Those with rank have power, and you were expected to fall in line. Your common birth is likely apparent in your speech, clothing, and bearing.

What was the economic and social station of your parents? Were they peasant laborers or tradespeople? Were your family members servants to wealthy and powerful people, or did you have wealth or power yourselves? If they were wealthy, was it "old money" or a recent acquisition? Was your family respected in your community?

When you dealt with people of other social classes, how did you treat them? Do you respect people of other social classes, or do you disdain or despise them? Were you ever embroiled in a struggle against someone of higher or lower social rank? What was it about, and what happened as a result? Do you hold with the customs and tastes of your social class or have you rejected them for the customs and manners of a higher or lower class?

## Magic

Most of the standard humanoid races aren't inherently magical, though their members may come to study magic and learn its secrets over time. If you come from a nonmagical culture, the arcane arts might seem strange—like cheating at life or breaking religious taboos. Or perhaps you were taught to embrace magic as a wondrous and fantastic means of accomplishing the impossible.

How much did you know about magic growing up? Was it a part of your everyday life or something that was only spoken about in superstition, tales, and legends? Were you ever placed under a spell or curse? Did you develop any strange, supernatural powers as a child? Did you ever experiment with magic unsupervised? Are you affected by any long-lasting magical effects, including enchantments or curses cast upon you in your early life?



## Religion and Ritual

Parents usually pass their religious beliefs to their children by instructing them in the customs, dogma, practices, rituals, and traditions of their faith. Tradition and ritual play a major part in cultures, determining festivals, initiation rites to adulthood, and holidays. Even if you're not religious, you probably have had some experience with religion as a child, perhaps from a relative, friend, or followers of the dominant faith of the region where you grew up.

Did your parents follow the same faith, and did they instruct you in those teachings? In a world of death and uncertainty, how important were religious beliefs and traditions to your family's life? What was a particular custom of your religion or a tradition your family practiced? What were the ethical or religious taboos? Whether or not you are religious, do you abide by a certain ritual or maintain any taboos? Did you follow the religious teachings of your family or reject them? If you followed them, what comfort did they give during the difficult transition from childhood to adulthood?

## Major Childhood Event

From the perspective of a child, the world is a different place. Depending upon one's circumstances and outlook, the world might seem a lovely paradise filled with wonders or a dreary, meaningless hell brimming with barely contained horrors. The events of childhood meaningfully impact the perception of the world a child carries into adulthood.

With this in mind, describe a significant event from childhood that shaped you and that you still think about from time to time. This might be something personal, like the day you were initiated into a religious order, the circumstances under which you made a lifelong friend, or a time your parent or caretaker punished you severely. On the other hand, it might instead be something that affected other people on a larger scale, such as being caught in the midst of a great fire, surviving a widespread plague, or witnessing a major historical event.

This event is one of the strongest influences on your early life. Look for ways that this event continues to shape your personality in the present.

## ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is the physical and psychological transition from childhood to adulthood in which you start to become more conscious of the world around you. This is the time when you grow in body and mind, take greater risks, question the rules and structures under which you've lived, and test the boundaries and authorities that put those structures in place. It's also when many key events happen that influence you toward the path of the character class you will one day adopt. Now that you know something of your childhood circumstances, imagine the kinds of risks and choices you might have taken upon entering adolescence. Conversely, imagine the kinds of risks and choices you would avoid because of ethics, family, customs,

tradition, religion, pride, or fear. As you read through the following categories, consider the questions and take some time to visualize the experiences you encountered during this turbulent time.

## Initiation Rites

In most cultures and communities, rites or rituals accompany the transition from childhood into adolescence, even if such customs are informal or unstructured. The formal traditions are usually sacred to the community, as they mark the end of an individual's childhood and the beginning of his life as an adult.

Were there racial customs you observed when you passed from childhood into adolescence? Did your religion ceremonially initiate you as a member of the faith? When did your community recognize you as a young adult, and what privileges and responsibilities came with that status? Do you or your family belong to a special organization, group, gang, company, or guild that requires you to complete a test of adulthood before you may be recognized among its ranks? What family customs, traditions, or heirlooms are passed down to you upon entering adulthood?

## Friends, Allies, and Influences

Desire for acceptance and recognition among one's peers drive the decisions of most adolescents. Some adolescents seek acceptance wherever it's given freely, while others strive to prove themselves in order to win the respect of those they admire. The friendships you make in this transitional time may not be ones that last a lifetime, but these friends are often ones you feel you need so you can survive your youth. These individuals open your mind to new experiences and different points of view, and they have a major influence on your interests, knowledge, and development.

Imagine a person you sought acceptance from as an adolescent. Was this person the savior you needed in a time of crisis, or someone who challenged your beliefs or turned you away from what you'd been taught growing up? As you strived to measure up to this person's esteem, what skills or practices did you learn? Did you have idle time with this person, and how did you fill those hours? What long-term influence did this person have upon the way you think now? If you were friends, are you still friends today?

## Class Event

You are a product of your environment; the various influences of friends, family, and associates; and pure happenstance. Some talents you discovered in childhood have matured into practiced skills during your progress through adolescence. These talents showed an inclination toward a certain career path—in your case, the first steps toward your character class. Think of the class you've chosen to play and imagine the single most important event from your early life that put you on this path. Looking back on your life, is there an event





without which your life might have followed a very different course?

Did your parents send you to a special school to learn magic? Did you have a religious revelation that turned you into a crusader for your deity? Were you kicked out of your home and forced to survive on the streets? Did a wealthy patron hear you playing music and offer you a position in her household as a minstrel? Were you conscripted into the army or given an ancestral weapon or item?

### **First Love**

As adolescents start to physically mature, they make their first experimental attempts at courtship. These attempts are often deeply felt, passionate, awkward, and unforgettable. Your first experience with courtship may grant you enormous confidence or sap it all away, giving rise to feelings of shame and inadequacy. Maybe you never recovered from the emotional scars of adolescence, always after bearing the pain and humiliation, barricading your heart against emotion. Or maybe you dismissed your own crushed feelings and become a careless charmer or philanderer, always courting one or more lovers, but remaining emotionally distant from all.

Who was your first love? Did you hold mutual admiration for one another, or did you pine from afar? What profession and social class were his or her parents? How long did it

last? Do you know where this person is now, and do you still think about him or her? What lessons did you learn from the experience, and was it a source of joy or pain? Did you court many others after this relationship?

### **Duty and Responsibilities**

As you grew from a child into someone more physically capable and psychologically aware, your family may have requested more of your help. What duties and responsibilities did you gain? Were these tasks primarily physical or mental in nature? Were they focused toward a profession or were you asked to take on responsibilities of a different or unusual nature? In what way did these activities improve your mind, body, or spirit? If other creatures (such as beasts or monsters) raised you, what was expected of you in that culture?

### **ADULTHOOD**

When you reach biological maturity, undergo the final initiation rites of adolescence, or reach the age of legal responsibility in your culture, you're considered an adult. At this point, you're the sum of all the feelings, experiences, and choices you have made from birth through adolescence. You are capable of analyzing your past, and your emotional and intellectual response to your experiences shapes your moral and ethical view of the world.



In adulthood, you likely adopt your character class—although some people might assume full careers in the military, academia, the seminary, or a trade years before they begin adventuring, just as others pass through adolescence swiftly and reach maturity at an extremely young age. Playing an older or younger character can vary the party dynamic, and may warrant one extra or one fewer trait during character creation in order to reflect the character's greater or narrower life experience, at the GM's discretion. (See Young Characters on page 194.) No matter your age, the experiences of your earlier life are a prologue to the character class you've chosen.

The following categories explore character conflicts and vulnerability that shape your worldview, philosophy, and alignment—the results of your journey to adulthood. As you read through this section, consider the amount of life experience you have upon entering the campaign.

## Conflict and Behavior

Conflict is at the heart of character development. The actions you take in response to conflict define you and determine your alignment. Even if you *perceive* yourself as pure and good, fair and impartial, or wild and individualistic, what do you actually *do* when you're faced with an external or internal conflict and those values are challenged? Do you

adhere to a code of behavior (lawful), look for the best way to resolve the conflict fairly (neutral), or act on impulse according to what feels right in the moment (chaotic)? When resolving a conflict, do you attempt to act in the best interests of others (good), strive for an equal or just resolution for all sides no matter the cost (neutral), or make decisions that benefit yourself at the expense of others (evil)? The choices you make over time add up to determine your moral and philosophical view of the world.

Very few characters consider themselves evil. Evil characters justify their selfish or destructive behavior with reasons they believe to be sound. Likewise, there are many selfless creatures who work tirelessly for the betterment of others but remain too humble and aware of their own flaws to think of themselves as good. When thinking about your alignment, examine the past you have created so far. What alignment would you give yourself while in character? Which one are you really?

## Vulnerability

As you grow up, you struggle against various opposing forces and people in your environment—siblings, parents, peers, bullies, laws, and so on. You learn to insulate yourself against physical and emotional harm while making decisions that will protect you, your loved ones, or your interests. These conflicts can leave emotional scars, or vulnerabilities.





A vulnerability is a chink in your armor, something you love or fear that affects you on the deepest level. Hard choices—the ones that truly dictate alignment—are grounded in emotional vulnerability. When someone is pushing your buttons, that person is exploiting an emotional vulnerability, playing on your cares, personal insecurities, fears, or foibles. Since the most interesting characters to watch, read, and play are those with an emotional vulnerability, giving yourself one goes a long way toward making you a complex and fully realized individual as well as providing strong story hooks for your GM.

Character vulnerabilities come from strong emotions—such as love and fear—rooted in experiences from your developmental years. In childhood, you gain your first impressions of the world, love, loyalty, and friendship. In adolescence, you struggle for acceptance among superiors and peers, dealing with complex new emotions, philosophies, and ways of perceiving the world. Think of a lesson you learned in childhood. Did it cause you to view the world in a more positive or negative light? How does this lesson still affect you today? Name an occasion from adolescence that caused you pain. Looking back on that experience, how do you feel about it today? Has your viewpoint changed? Did you deserve the pain? Do you still bear a grudge against those who wronged you? These events might correspond to choices you made earlier as you developed your background.

In your adult life, name one person or thing you cherish or love and one person or thing you hate or fear. Are your feelings about these people or things known? If so, who knows? Now think of one person or thing that brings you happiness, pleasure, or contentment, and one person or thing that annoys, saddens, or disgusts you. What makes you feel this way? What part of yourself do you hide from the world, and why? If this person, object, memory, belief, or value was attacked or exposed, how far would you go to defend it?

Some characters work to make themselves impervious to emotion and attachment. Such characters include solemn monks, mercenary warlords, ruthless assassins, and dangerous sociopaths, to name just a few. Yet even they protect some emotional core hidden behind their internal walls. If you are playing an “emotionless” character, how deep is this core buried, and under what circumstances might it be penetrated or revealed? What could someone else possibly say or do to make you reveal a hidden side of yourself? What is the one thing that matters most to you, and what would you do if you lost it?

### **Friends, Associates, and Companions**

It's not necessary for you to know all of your adventuring companions when you start a campaign, but establishing prior connections within the group facilitates party and story cohesion. In campaigns where all the characters start as strangers, the story can feel disjointed or the game unbalanced since the party consists of independent individuals with little reason to cooperate or care about

## **TWO QUIRKS AND A FLAW: QUICK AND DIRTY CHARACTER ESTABLISHMENT**

If you're pressed for time or you're looking to create the basics of a character as simply as possible, establish the essence of your personality by thinking of two quirks and a flaw. Quirks are specific attributes of your personality or psyche: character traits, compulsions, eccentricities, or uncommon physical features. These shouldn't be commonplace or mundane. “Tall” is a poor one, but “too big for my body” could be great. “Charismatic” is weak, but “flirts with nearly everybody I meet” is specific and actionable. “Homebody” is not as good a quirk as “feels tired, uncomfortable, and hungry away from home.”

Add a flaw the same way. Instead of merely being “arrogant,” maybe you “believe I'm smarter than anyone I know.” Perhaps you're not so much “proud” as “afraid of being wrong and looking stupid.” Rather than “greedy,” you may be “terrified of dying poor and hungry.”

When you choose an attribute or trait to use as a quirk or flaw, you can dig deeper into the concept by asking yourself how and why. If you're shy, *how* shy are you? So shy that you can never look anyone directly in the eye? If you're paranoid, *why* are you paranoid? Maybe everyone you've ever trusted betrayed you? Homing in on desires and fears will help answer those questions. For the sake of brevity, the background generator uses basic descriptors for quirks and flaws. Take a little time to further build on those bare-bones descriptors with these sort of details, which will help color in an otherwise simple, nondescript character.

one another. In contrast, campaigns that begin with one or two characters knowing each another are easier to get moving, since those characters have history—a set of shared memories that ties them together. In drama, scenes between people who know one another, even if only by reputation, tend to be more compelling than scenes between people with no prior relationship.

Consider the other characters in your group. Pick one or more of them and establish a prior acquaintance or connection. Did you meet once in the past while working for the same employer? Have you been lifelong friends? Were you competitors for the love of someone else? Did you have a past or current rivalry? Are you related? Do you know one another by reputation? If so, what have you heard?

Finally, no character is an island; even evil characters interact with people outside their immediate friend group from time to time. Think of someone outside your party who you come into regular contact with. Who is this person, and what does he or she mean to you? Are you friends? Lovers? Enemies? What influence might this person have over you? What's your influence over this person? Share this NPC with your GM as a contact for story development and future adventures.