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Writing *Compelling* Antagonists

The Art of Creating Multi-Dimensional Villains



Create unforgettable villains.

"Every villain is a hero in their own mind."

TOM HIDDLESTON

We want villains that...

- ...are more than just *evil*.
- ...make us torn about rooting for them.
- ...are fun to write.
- ...we can't forget!

But how? 🤔

Hey! I'm Dana.

I love to make king-size quilts, knit audiobook sweaters, and food prep because we empty-nesters can't survive on takeout.

I'm a story nerd running on coffee, cotton fabric, and Kindle Unlimited. And I love helping writers become authors of addictive novels—stories your readers can't put down.

One of the ways I do this is through the Addictive Novel Mentorship program, a process I've used for myself while writing over 60 books and for clients—plotting and editing hundreds of novels by Amazon Top 100, USA Today, and New York Times bestselling authors.

This mentorship walks you through twelve modules to move from an idea to a complete draft of your novel with me beside you.

I want to help you finish your novel with confidence--conceptualize, structure, *and* write. Because *I believe your story and voice matter.*

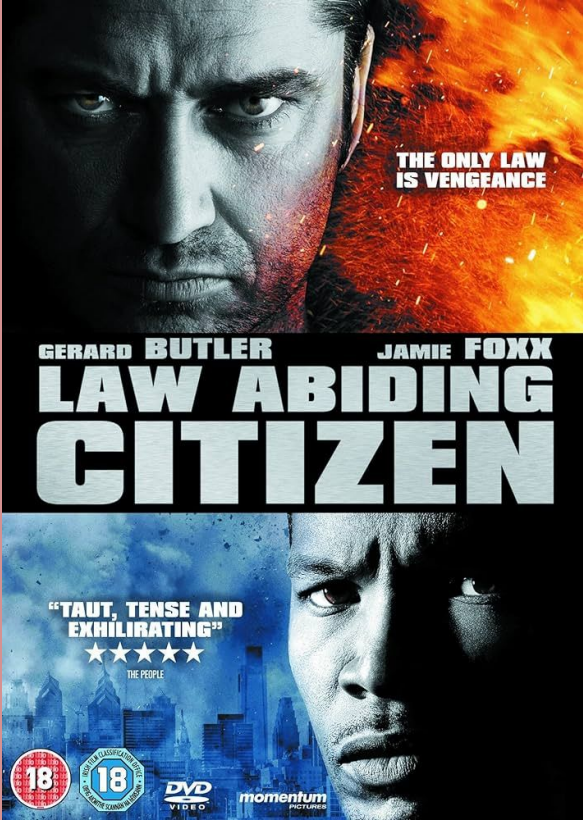


Results

- I'm USA Today Bestselling Author.
- Authored 60+ books under several pen names.
- Developmental editor and Publishing Coach.
- Course Creator of the Addictive Novel Mentorship Program.
- Host of Romanced by the Book.



It started with a pesky problem...



THE ONLY LAW
IS VENGEANCE

GERARD BUTLER

JAMIE FOXX

LAW ABIDING CITIZEN

"TAUT, TENSE AND
EXHILIRATING"



THE PEOPLE



**"Villains are not evil; they are just
misunderstood heroes of their own stories,
driven by motives obscured to us."**

UNKNOWN

Starts with...

1. Define Core Motivations
2. Craft a Detailed Backstory
3. Assign Admirable Qualities
4. Establish a Connection to the Protagonist
5. Integrate Antagonist and World Building

STEP ONE

Define Core Motivations

Identify the fundamental motivations driving your antagonist.

Are they driven by fear, revenge, a quest for power, or a warped sense of justice?

"Every villain is a hero in their own mind."

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STEP TWO

Craft a Detailed Backstory

Develop a rich backstory that explains how your antagonist arrived at their current mindset. Include key events like traumas, successes, and defining moments.

**"Every great story needs a dragon to
be slain, and every dragon deserves to
be understood."**

UNKNOWN

STEP THREE

Assign Admirable Qualities

Give your antagonist traits or skills that can be admired or feared, such as charisma, intelligence, or resilience.

**"A truly memorable villain is the one
who can make you secretly root for
them, just a little bit."**

UNKNOWN

STEP FOUR

Establish a Connection to the Protagonist

Create a personal link between your antagonist and protagonist. This could be a shared history, a direct rivalry, or deeply intertwined destinies.

**"A good antagonist is someone who is
equally as interesting and complex as
the protagonist."**

K.M. WEILAND

STEP FIVE

Integrate Antagonist and World Building

Ensure that your antagonist embodies or reflects broader themes or conflicts within your fantasy world.

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who can make you secretly root for
them, just a little bit."**

UNKNOWN

For Example...



Ravenna from Snow White & the Huntsman (2012)



Core Motivations: Obsessed with beauty and power as means to secure her survival and reign.

Detailed Backstory: Ravenna's youth influenced by harsh realities and lessons about the power and vulnerability tied to beauty.

Admirable Qualities: Charismatic and powerful sorceress, using her magical abilities to command and manipulate.

Connection to Protagonist: Sees Snow White both as a threat to her power and as a reflection of her own lost innocence.

World Building: Embodies the dark side of vanity and the corrupting influence of power within the kingdom.

Sheriff of Nottingham from Robin Hood (2018)



Core Motivations: Driven by a desire for power and control over Nottingham, using taxation and fear.

Detailed Backstory: Often depicted as a corrupt official who has climbed the ranks through cunning and ruthlessness.

Admirable Qualities: Strategic thinker and manipulator, skilled in political and psychological warfare.

Connection to Protagonist: Robin Hood's arch-nemesis, representing the oppressive authority Robin fights against.

World Building: Symbolizes the corruption and decay of justice in medieval England, opposing Robin's fight for the common man.

Mehmed from Dracula Untold (2014)



Core Motivations: Seeks to strengthen and expand the Ottoman Empire, driven by a vision of legacy and power.

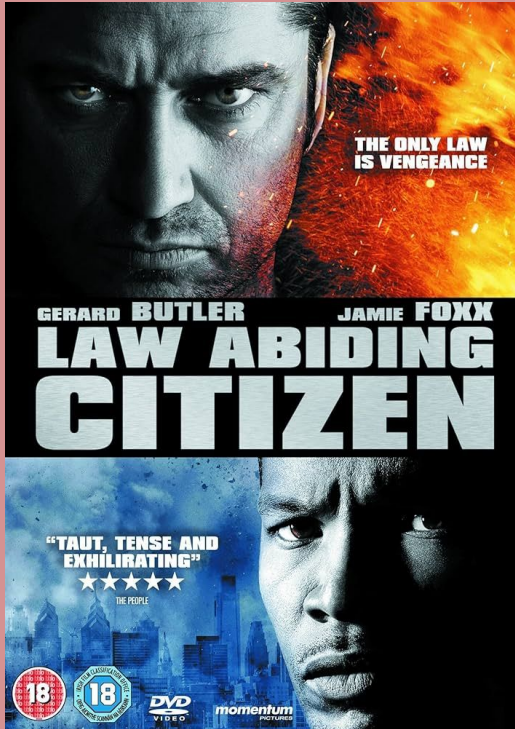
Detailed Backstory: Grew up in the royal court, understanding early the burdens and demands of leadership and conquest.

Admirable Qualities: Commanding leader, strategic and bold, with a deep sense of duty to his empire.

Connection to Protagonist: Vlad and Mehmed were childhood friends turned adversaries, adding a personal betrayal to their conflict.

World Building: Embodies the expansionist and authoritarian aspects of the empire, contrasting Vlad's more personal and localized leadership.

Clyde from Law Abiding Citizen (2009)



Core Motivations: Driven by grief and a desire for justice after his family's murderers are inadequately punished.

Detailed Backstory: A brilliant engineer and tactician, his skills turn sinister as he seeks to expose flaws in the legal system.

Admirable Qualities: Highly intelligent and resourceful, using his strategic mind to orchestrate complex schemes.

Connection to Protagonist: Directly challenges the protagonist, prosecutor Nick Rice, pushing him to reconsider the values of the legal system.

World Building: Reflects the frustrations with and failures of the justice system, questioning the integrity of law enforcement and legal proceedings.

**"In the heart of every antagonist lies the
seed of a tale untold."**

UNKNOWN

Use it!



How? 🤔

**Transforming them into characters
that readers love to hate.**

Recap

1. Define Core Motivations
2. Craft a Detailed Backstory
3. Assign Admirable Qualities
4. Establish a Connection to the Protagonist
5. Integrate Antagonist and World Building

Starting May 1, 2024



<https://danjatales.com/create-addictive-villians/>

Q&A

Thank you!