

Dorothea Hartwell

Protagonist - late 70s



Dorothea Hartwell · CHARACTER BIBLE

ROLE	Protagonist
AGE RANGE	late 70s
ONE-LINE ESSENCE	A seventy-eight-year-old keeper of recipes and stories who finds joy and purpose in ordinary kitchen moments and genuine friendship.
APPEARANCE	Petite and soft-bodied, with silver hair worn in a practical bob, kind eyes behind wire-rimmed glasses, and hands that move with practiced certainty. She dresses in comfortable cardigans and floral print blouses, often dusted with flour.
DISTINGUISHING FEATURES	A faded ink stain on her left index finger from decades of recipe-writing, and the way she tilts her head when listening-as if committing every word to memory. Her reading glasses dangle from a beaded chain around her neck.
VOICE / TONE	warm, unhurried, occasionally mischievous
SPEECH PATTERNS	She punctuates stories with small, knowing chuckles and often begins sentences with 'Now, the thing about that is...' She speaks in full thoughts rather than fragments, and rarely rushes to fill silences.
SIGNATURE PHRASE / TIC	"That's the secret ingredient-not in the recipe, in the company."
HISTORY	Dorothea moved to her current neighborhood forty-two years ago as a young widow raising three children on a librarian's salary. She began collecting recipes as a way to process grief and build community, hosting modest dinner parties that became legendary among neighbors. Her children grew successful but distant; her kitchen became her truest home.
FORMATIVE EVENT	When her husband died suddenly at fifty-two, she was left with three young children and a stack of his mother's handwritten recipe cards-the only inheritance that truly mattered. Writing down the stories behind each recipe became her way of keeping him close while moving forward.
PRETENDS VS. ACTUALLY IS	She presents herself as content with her quiet life, a harmless grandmother puttering in her kitchen-but she's actually hungry for relevance, terrified that her children see her as irrelevant, and desperately wants to prove her life's work has real meaning. The baking competition awakens ambition she thought she'd long buried.

WANTS (CONSCIOUS GOAL)	To win the baking competition and have her children acknowledge that her recipes and friendships are not a waste of time, but proof that she's built something worthy and lasting.
FEARS	That her children will force her into assisted living and scatter her recipe collection, erasing fifty years of connection and memory. That she'll disappear quietly into a studio apartment, unmissed and unremembered.
NEEDS (UNCONSCIOUS TRUTH)	To learn that her worth isn't dependent on her children's approval or her productivity-that joy itself is the achievement, and that her friendships are the true family she's created.
ARC - WHERE THEY START	Dorothea is defensive about her recipe collection and hobby, quick to laugh off its importance and quick to defer to her children's judgment, even as it stings. She doubts whether her life has mattered.
ARC - INFLECTION POINT	The moment the regional baking competition result is announced and her humble apple cake wins Best in Show-not because of professional credentials, but because of genuine heart. She realizes she's already proven something by accident; now she must choose to stand by it openly.
ARC - WHERE THEY END	Dorothea stops apologizing for her kitchen, her friendships, or her age. She invites her children to her home to share the real story behind the winning cake-and discovers that some battles aren't won by convincing others, but by refusing to diminish yourself.