

Laura Stephens
"Ophelia" Character Background

This character background is inspired by a real person.

Ophelia was born the middle child of three children in Bristol, United Kingdom. Her parents never got along, since shortly after were married. When her mother was 18, she tried to act rebellious, and dropped out of high school ("college") to marry her boyfriend who was the typical "rocker" in town. He owned a motorcycle, chain smoked cigarettes, and slicked his hair back with wax and grease. They ran off to what they thought was a sunset, but after a few months, it turned out to be a pregnancy. Right before Ophelia's older sister was born, her father got into a bad motorcycle accident and severely crippled his legs. The insurance paid him for the damage to his body, and he stopped working, with the intent of living off his insurance money. However, a year or two after Ophelia's sister was born, and Ophelia's mother was pregnant with her, the money ran out, and Ophelia's family was forced to live with Ophelia's maternal grandmother. The grandmother never approved of the marriage in the first place, and constantly cursed the marriage and the children. She would constantly call the children "monsters" and would neglect them. Ophelia's mother, who was unhappy with her marriage, also considered her children to be monsters, and never cared to look after them. The father, who was crippled, sat around and watched TV and smoked cigarettes and refused to get a job.

Ophelia grew up neglected, in a cramped household. Her bedroom was barely larger than a closet and she owned no material things of her own. She never was bought any toys, and she never was allowed to have any friends over. Her grandmother would use her as a scapegoat, and lay blame on her if something broke. After all, she was the youngest child, and so if something was missing, they blamed the child that would be the most likely culprit, even if her sister was the one who was guilty of anything.

Ophelia was constantly teased in school. All of her clothes were old hand-me-downs from her older sister, and she had tangle-prone ratty blonde hair because nobody encouraged her to brush it in the morning, and she a hooked nose. She had very few friends, and the ones she would have liked to have considered "friends" were the nice children who were generally friendly to everyone and held no particularly special feelings for her. She never felt welcomed anywhere, whether at school, or at home. In general, Ophelia grew up feeling unloved.

As Ophelia grew older, to elementary school age, she began to be verbally attacked by her family even more. Her family started calling her a "loser" for not having friends, for not being smarter, for not looking pretty, and for not standing out. Her parents punished her when the children in her school began to be infected

with lice. Lice was a common problem, especially among children whose parents were in denial of their children's infections, so Ophelia was constantly battling lice in her hair. Because of this, her parents threw away her pillow, and never replaced it. She was forced to sleep with a sofa cushion for a pillow starting at the age of 8. She never, in all the rest of her life, ever got a real pillow back.

By the time Ophelia entered middle school in Bristol, she began having doubts as to her future. All the mental damage from her parents, and the constant screaming at home, between her parents, and the verbal abuse directed to her and her sister, Ophelia *felt* like a loser, and had no hopes or dreams for her future. Her parents constantly told her the "educational system" was a "hoax" and that nobody *really* needed to go to school, because everything one really need to learn in life is taught by the end of third grade, and wherever one's first job is.

When Ophelia was fourteen, her grandmother who had been retired from teaching for twenty years, decided she wanted to make use of the "Internet" and pursue her dream of making clip-art for projects. The grandmother then sold her home in England and looked for a house in France, because the property value was cheaper, and one could get a bigger home for less money. That's when she stumbled upon an old 30-room chateau that had just gone onto the market under a bank foreclosure. Deciding it'd be wise to invest in real estate, the grandmother pooled every last cent of her money into buying the castle in the middle of France, and invited the entire family to move with her, since she had all the extra rooms.

Ophelia's mother grabbed the opportunity to move out to a large house, because her family not only had no money, but she just found out she was pregnant with an unplanned third child. Within several short weeks, Ophelia's family moved to the middle of nowhere in France, in a castle, which had no heat, and was twenty miles away from the nearest town. She knew no French, and she had no friends. Her parents said to her that it'd be wise if she didn't ever go back to school. So, she didn't. She never went back to school, and decided to instead play around on the Internet all day while her grandmother started up a small private clip art business with the small amount of savings she "borrowed" from Ophelia's mother, but never had any intention of paying back.

The grandmother immediately put the children to work, forcing Ophelia and her older sister to do work for her without pay. While the grandmother went out to shop and travel with money that wasn't hers, the entire business was left to a fourteen and seventeen year old couple of girls, directed by the mother. Every year, Ophelia's mother would promise her she'd get a bank account and finally earn something for her work, but whenever Ophelia would remind her mother of her promise, her mother would cry and say her daughter was abusing her and expecting too much of her. Ophelia grew up fast, working for her grandmother without pay. Her family continued to verbally abuse her, and if anything went wrong, it was always Ophelia's fault. If the tea was cold, it was Ophelia's fault. If the coffee wasn't ready for the grandmother in the morning, it was Ophelia's fault. If the dog accidentally got pregnant from the neighbor's black lab, it was Ophelia's fault. Her

family constantly ridiculed her for being the worthless child, and she still never even got a pillow.

More birthdays passed, and Ophelia never once in her entire life had a birthday party. Her younger brother never went to school. Because her family lived in France, but were British, the parents found a loophole in the education system that stated that the child is allowed to legally be home-schooled if a tutor visits the home. Because the grandmother had been a teacher 30 years before (and now lost her certification, but the government didn't need to know that), they wrote him off as being home-schooled, and because the son was declared a British citizen and had a British passport, the French government didn't have the jurisdiction to force the child to go to school. So, they raised the son to be old enough to go onto a computer and search Google for whatever he was interested in learning. That's how they decided to raise him with his education.

The brother never once made a single friend, and grew up quickly, showing the verbally abusive traits of his parents, the only people he really knew. He was never allowed to leave the house. He, Ophelia, and Ophelia's older sister, were kept at home, and neither Ophelia or her sister were allowed to get driver's licenses. When their passports expired, the parents never renewed them, and kept the information secret from the children. Ophelia attempted to make some money by taking art commissions on the web, but whatever money she made, was forced to go into her grandmother's bank account. Her grandmother would then go out and travel, or buy a new pair of shoes with the money. Ophelia worked on commissions for 7 years, and never saw a single cent of her money.

Now Ophelia is 22 years old, and is trapped in a castle in the middle of France, with no car, no money, no friends, and no pillow. She's developed an acute case of anemia because her parents never fed her anything but steaks and potatoes while growing up. When not eating steak or "chips", Ophelia survives off of cup ramen, because it's cheap and the one thing her mother will buy for her if the mother remembers her when she goes to the store. She asks for fresh vegetables to help her health, but nobody in her family except for Ophelia likes vegetables, so they never buy them. As a result, Ophelia has grown to be sickly and malnourished. She's constantly ill with a low immune system, and the lack of heat in the house makes her even sicker. She can't ever warm up under a blanket because she's too anemic and has too low of blood pressure to produce proper body heat.

The only escape that Ophelia has is the Internet, and online websites on which she can submit her personal artwork. She makes a lot of superficial friends on the site, many of whom are half a decade younger than her and look up to her as a role model. One of her friends, who is sixteen, had decided to drop out of school recently because they view her life (with limited knowledge of the truth) as a success story, that she was able to make good artwork while not attending school.

Ophelia has a hard time keeping online friends because of her social immaturity and her explosive temper if she doesn't get what she wants. She never

gets anything she wants in real life, so she expects “true friends” to dedicate themselves to her exclusively online, or she views them as wastes of time. Because of this, a lot of people have attached themselves to her out of their own insecurity of feeling outwardly rejected, yelled at, or simply not good enough for her. She verbally abuses her friends when she gets upset, and a lot of them become used to it, brushing it off as “part of her personality.”

Ophelia has big dreams for her future, to become a famous animator one day, and she likes to experiment with digital animation; however, she never completes her projects, and most of her best work has never been seen. She’s insecure about her artwork, and she can’t handle herself because she’s her own worst critic. Once she criticizes a part of what she does, it’s like the wall crumbles on her, because her family tells her she’s worthless, and then when she feels she’s worthless, she spirals into depression. She has a hard time battling manic depression because of this, and the fact she can’t ever impress herself, even though she’s gained incredible popularity online.

Her backup dream, if she can’t become an animator, is to become a comic artist. That’s the one dream that keeps her going, and she continually writes a fan-comic of an anime series, which is popular among teenagers online. She hopes that one day her hobbies will be discovered by someone famous, and she’ll get an incredible job offer, which she can do from home, since she’s too insecure to actually leave the French castle in which she lives.