

Playwright's notes on the characters in "The Goldfish Letters"

(Steve Stajich)

TED... (late 30's, early 40's. AGE GIVEN: 42) lives his life as though certain things can be expected or foreseen, and when they come to pass... that proves that he's right in his belief on that. Long ago, TED adopted an attitude that, to some extent, people have a 'sheep' quality. That might explain why he's done well in his job to influence outcomes beneficial to his employers. That doesn't mean TED is unkind, or unloving. But it makes him tentative of just 'going on faith' on many things. TED is one of those husbands who is now a father and still isn't quite sure that "family always comes first"... even if one is expected to live that way. How did he get to that? We learn something that might speak to that regarding TED's own family at the end of the play. TED might believe that while a lot of things can be controlled, life itself cannot.

ALICE... (late 30's) is earthy, and she brings that dimension to the "family" and family issues. But she's not a hippie; she married a guy that was on his way up in cable TV. ALICE was much more interested in adopting a child than TED was, but with kids and adoption it's often the case that one partner is more 'into' things than the other. She knew that TED was achievement-oriented long before they married. In Chicago she may have laid back on asserting her own view as he climbed, being the supportive wife. Some would say that's the way of things "traditionally." Does she believe their whole life together should be lived that way? She now has more 'voice' in things than she ever did in Chicago, but she's also the one in the relationship more in touch with the fragile nature of marriage. That doesn't mean she lives with one hand ready to open the door and walk out. She just thinks about that door more often than TED does.

OLD MAN... (AGE GIVEN: mid to late 70's) is the character's name in the play. What he does and what he insists about his nature... that's something that the character is doing. The OLD MAN is a mystery, however, and we need to sustain that until the last two pages. What we learn at the very end is that, before tragedy, the OLD MAN made a living helping people who struggled with themselves and their lives. Knowledge of that by the actor should be felt in the character. But the audience cannot know what the actor knows.

LAWYER... (Middle aged, must be older than TED) has a kind of "wisdom", but it is wisdom about resolving conflict. That's not the same as truly or deeply understanding what makes people 'tick'. It's not the same kind of understanding (we learn at the end) that the OLD MAN has a result of his background. LAWYER believes in the stuff of life (a nice car is nice), and that hard work brings those rewards. Life isn't fair, and that's great because that's how lawyers make their living. Some lawyers want to help people and work specifically in areas that do that. Others are more interested in helping themselves. Perhaps our LAWYER can do both.