

Introducing the Players: A Cast of Contradictions

Sam - A Wounded Patriot

A walking contradiction forged in the sands of Basra, Iraq. Sam is an unemployed Iraq War veteran, a former US Army soldier whose tour (March 2003 –April 2005) ended with a devastating roadside bomb. The IED that tore through his armored vehicle, killing two of his comrades, and leaving him with crippling injuries and invisible psychological scars. Now, his days are a blur of heavy metal music, copious beer, and aspirational computer programming classes. His current mission is simple: secure a "decent job" with a military contractor and find a "decent lady" who appreciates football, gaming, and high-calorie comfort food. Sam champions himself as a paragon of traditional American values and patriotism, but the truth is muddier. Beneath the flag-waving facade lies a man who is often lazy, self-indulgent, and motivated mostly by profit and personal glory rather than any commitment to democracy, human rights, or the rule of law.

Terri: An Ambitious Explorer

An inquisitive freelance writer and journalist living with her mother and chubby cat near Washington D.C.. She was blindsided by a 1998 layoff, a professional setback that strangely mirrors her messy personal life. Her 1991–1996 marriage to a junior D.C. lobbyist left her with ambivalence toward men in general. While a brief 2007 relationship with Sam proved fruitless, her current fixation is Kris. Alas, those feelings are one-way. Terri likes to think of herself as independently-minded and prejudice-free. In reality, she isn't quite sure of anything and regards life as an ongoing series of question marks. Her struggle with her own contradictions is a daily exercise, currently manifesting in an attempt to shed fifteen pounds without sacrificing her beloved Coldstone® Ice Creams.

Ted: A Grounded Riser

A "successful" retired veteran and head of a bustling employment agency on the outskirts of Washington D.C. Ted served in Iraq alongside Sam, a foundational experience that prompted to get out of the army with honorable discharge in 2006. He leveraged his experience to start a small business dedicated to helping jobless people find so-called "meaningful work." Now a rising entrepreneur, he boasts a beautiful house in Virginia and a picture-perfect family: a loving wife and two charming daughters. Ted operates with a powerful practical streak, often bordering on the anti-intellectual, and prides himself on being a "realist" who "cuts through bullshit." While his grounded nature is his strength, it's also a limitation. He's often afraid to confront the deeper connections between the events in his own life and the larger world around him, which ultimately restricts his vision and makes him a small thinker.

Kris: A Code Warrior Thrill-Seeker

A third-generation Korean-American computer programmer with a need for speed. Kris programs for a small Virginia-based game company, but her real life is lived on the edge: parasailing, snowboarding, and kayaking—anything that delivers a sensational rush. Despite being raised in a strict Christian household, her true deities are more often Bugs Bunny and Ollie the Pig than any Old Testament prophets. Battling attention deficit disorder and overwhelmed by multiple SNS involvements, her focus is a precious, fleeting thing. But when she does manage to zero in, her energy is phenomenal, radiating an alluring joie de vivre. Distrusting things claiming to be profound, often she moves so fast through life that she doesn't pause to look beneath its polished surface. Is she simply obsessed with "getting things right," or is she relentlessly attempting to outrun her own shadow?

Tim: A Jaded Intellectual

Sam's father and a cynical, retired professor who now spends most of his time abroad, only returning Stateside for a once-yearly visit. Tim was once an idealistic, new-age liberal, but his progressive vision curdled over time. The election of Donald Trump proved to be a tipping point, permanently shattering his belief in America. Now divorced and working as a ghost writer on various projects, he clings to his self-image as an "intellectual." In reality, he has become a meaningless fossil—a man whose noble-sounding, eloquent words rarely, if ever, translate into meaningful action. relentlessly attempting to outrun her own shadow?

- T Newfields

Beg.: 2002 Nagoya ☆ Fin.: 2025 Shizuoka

