

Characters and Themes

The protagonist is Evan Wilkins, a twenty-two year old private who is six feet tall, has brown hair, gray eyes, and a resting expression that hints of a grin. He is quiet, confident, and well liked by the men in his unit. Evan establishes a relationship with Amanda Nichols, the twenty-year-old daughter of a Hollywood film executive who lives in one of the mansions bordering the back side of the golf course. It is when Amanda asks Evan about his life, past, and parents that we encounter one of the major themes of the novel.

He answers that he grew up in McCall, Idaho, his mother passed away before his first birthday, and his father died before he was born. Evan grew into a man without his father.

“Who raised you, then?” Amanda then asks.

“I lived with my grandmother,” he answers. “Edna was alone. I was alone. She was good for me, and I was good for her. She had several old men who liked her, and that is how I learned to play golf. She made every one of them take me golfing...When she died, I joined the Army...Really, I am my family.”

Shooting an Albatross is a framed story that begins and ends with a man in his sixties hunting an even older man who is in his nineties. Ninety-four-year-old Floyd Akerly, the antagonist, was Evan’s commanding officer sixty-four years earlier, back when Evan was staying on the golf course, but who is the man stalking Floyd? We learn by the end of the story that he is another man who, like Evan, lost his father before he was born. He teaches us what becomes most important in a bloodline of fatherless men.

Floyd Akerly, Evan’s commanding officer, takes us inside the mind of a man as he falls from lieutenant all the way down to a lowly Runner, the only position in the army that is lower than a private. Floyd begins with suspicion, moves through offense, rage, and jealousy, and achieves psychotic brilliance with friendly fire murder. Floyd shows us the results of unchecked rage.

As for Amanda, left alone and pregnant in the mid-1940’s, spending her entire life alone, and instilling in her fatherless son a life-long love for the man he never knew, she takes to her death all of her secrets. What she does not take, however, are her journals. Her son reads the journals, acts, and then devotes the rest of his life to building a family legacy. The sequel to *Shooting an Albatross* is *Legacy Management* (commercial fiction, complete), which is also the name of the company Evan and Amanda’s son uses to fix his broken legacy.

Shooting an Albatross is a combination of *Titanic*’s look to the past, *The Notebook*’s touch of the heart, *The Natural*’s love of a game, and *Psycho*’s prick of the spine.