



# Au Revoir, Shosanna

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*The following is an analysis of a character in the movie "Inglourious Basterds". It is recommended to watch the movie before reading this. Otherwise, of course, a spoiler warning is in effect.*

In modern-day cinema, the plot is the soul of the film and many of these plots require complex protagonists to really strike a chord with the audience. Like Cobb struggling to let go of the memory of his dead wife in Inception or Wolverine, the man who can never be killed, coming to terms with old age in Logan. But there are few films in which the supporting characters steal the limelight even in the presence of the protagonist. One of them is Colonel Hans Landa of the SS, popularly known as "The Jew Hunter" from the film Inglourious Basterds. We will be looking at the traits of the character and what makes him interesting throughout the film scene by scene.

## ONCE UPON A TIME... IN NAZI - OCCUPIED FRANCE

An officer is seen to arrive at a small dairy farm with his security detail. The officer exits his car and introduces himself as Colonel Hans Landa of the SS to an insignificant farmer, which is uncommon for a high ranking officer such as himself, revealing him to be gentler than his fellow Nazis. After inviting himself inside the farmer's house he says he would have milk over wine. He starts to investigate about a Jewish family which was not "accounted" for and gets unconventionally excited upon hearing from the farmer that he has heard rumours of escape, pointing towards the eccentric nature of the Colonel.

Landa asks for another glass of milk and inquires if the farmer knows the nickname bestowed upon him by the people of France, confident that he would know, as Landa's reputation precedes him. "The Jew Hunter", the farmer says as he pushes the glass of milk towards Landa. After comparing Jews to rats and Germans to hawks, Landa praises Jews in being able to abandon their humanity in order to survive but also is confident that he can think like Jews as well making him a great "Hunter of the Jews". Changing his tone the Colonel asks, "May I smoke my pipe as well?" Afraid, the farmer says, "Please, Colonel, make yourself at home." And then... Landa removes from his pocket a pipe which bears a remarkable resemblance to Sherlock Holmes' pipe conveying to the audience that why he holds the post of Colonel even though he is not physically very strong. He is a detective and he has deduced that the farmer is hiding the Jewish family in his house. The farmer drops the act and reveals that he is indeed sheltering the Jewish family underneath his floorboards. Landa orders his men to assemble over

the floorboards and open fire to kill the Jewish family - bringing an end to the seemingly warm nature of his. One member, a girl named Shosanna manages to escape and instead of shooting her

Landa lets her escape exclaiming "Au Revoir, Shosanna". The whole scene gives us a complete insight into Landa's behaviour which is exemplified throughout the movie. He is a devil in disguise willing to go to any lengths to get what he desires and a shrewd detective who will fool you by his kind demeanour, and as soon as you let your guard down he will end you. Therefore it is best for you to be on the same side as him.

## GERMAN NIGHT IN PARIS

We jump to three years after the sequence of events in the first scene and we are informed that Shosanna, now known as Emmanuelle Mimieux, is an owner of a cinema in Paris and is being "persuaded" by Private Zoller and Dr. Goebbels in a restaurant to host a premiere of a German film

which will be attended by all the high ranking officers of the Third Reich. After agreeing to do so, while the rest leave Emmanuelle is requested to stay back for questioning by none other than Hans Landa as he is in-charge of security at the premiere. Landa is shown to be formal and respectful in his interrogation and orders a glass of milk for Emmanuelle. After the interrogation he lights a cigarette for himself as well as Emmanuelle which bears an uncanny resemblance to the first scene as Landa says gravely, "I did have something else I wanted to ask you." and after a long silence dismisses it as unimportant which showcases his sixth sense: as never having seen Shosanna, he still gets this predatory instinct that Emmanuelle is hiding something from him. Landa leaves the scene but his presence still lingers, sending shivers down our spine, and reminding us of his menacing nature despite his seemingly gentle demeanour. Shosanna is shaken to her core after meeting the man who slaughtered her family and



starts weeping profusely.

## OPERATION KINO

Landa reaches a tavern to investigate an incident in which a few German soldiers and their commanding officer lie dead. He identifies two soldiers as being the members of the Basterds, further affirming the detective skills that Landa possesses as The Basterds only left a few survivors with Swastika marks on their heads. He also finds a shoe belonging to Bridget and a napkin on which her autograph is present.

## REVENGE OF THE GIANT FACE

At the premiere, Landa approaches Bridget and inquires about the cast that she has on her leg to which Bridget replies that she hurt her leg mountain climbing. Hearing this Landa starts laughing hysterically as he cannot believe the absurdity of her lie and lets his suspicion of Bridget's lie be conveyed to her. He toys with her some more before asking about her guests (three members of The Basterds who barely speak Italian), who she claims are of Italian origin. Landa then goes on to address the guests in fluent Italian taking them by surprise. Though Landa knows that Bridget was at the tavern he acts as if he is ignorant of the given fact so convincingly, he should be given an Oscar. He then asks to have a word with Bridget in private where he orders her to put her foot on his thigh and proceeds to fit the shoe that he found in the tavern on her leg to let Bridget know that he knows she is a double agent. Landa chokes Bridget to a cold death, disclosing the lengths he is willing to go to sustain himself. He then kidnaps Aldo (the leader of the Basterds) and Utivich (a member of The Basterds). Landa then lets them know that he knows about their plan to blow up the cinema and essentially end the war by killing Der Führer and he can crush their plan by making a phone call. Now,

remember this is 1944, USA has joined the allies and the Axis powers are beginning to lose control over the regions they had captured and the end of the Third Reich is inevitable. Landa knows this and is easily ready to abandon the Nazi cause in the favour of staying alive which highlights that his loyalty is only

to himself and no one else. Hence he offers to conditionally surrender himself and avoid making the phone call if he gets safe passage to the USA and citizenship. Which he does end up getting but at the cost

of a permanent Swastika on his head carved out by Aldo.

## “A DETECTIVE. A DAMN GOOD DETECTIVE.”

Keeping aside the fact that Landa went through agonizing pain at the end of the movie he was the character that never had to suffer throughout the movie which elevates his status from just another villain to an elite league of extraordinary characters consisting the likes of Anton Chigurh, Darth Vader and The Joker. A calculating sociopath who is ahead of everyone at every step will always haunt you long after the movie is over. Landa is discovered to have a cynical disregard for morality and a sole focus. ■

## WATCH IT NOW



8.3/10

 metacritic

69%

 Rotten Tomatoes

88%

