

Nicholas Temelcoff

Character Analysis

Description:

- “Half-gloved hands”
- “He is burly on the ground”
- Is a spinner. “He links everyone”
- Is introduced in general terms.
- The “man in the air”
- The “speck against the horizon”

Traits:

- Is obviously selfless, as he catches the nun who falls off the bridge despite “knowing his rope would not hold them both.”
- “a daredevil”
- “He is solitary”
- “free falling like a dead star”

Background:

Nicholas was 25 years old when the war in the Balkans begun. After his village was burned he left with three friends on horseback. They rode to Trikala where they jumped on a train bound for Athens.

In Greece they bribed a boat captain to carry them to Trieste before jumping on another train to take them to France.

They then got on board the boat, *Le Haure*, and came to Canada.

Quotes that give insight into his beliefs, morals and attitudes:

- “He is happiest at daily chores.”
- “He knows his position in the air as if he is mercury slipping across a map.”
- “For Nicholas, language is much more difficult than what he does in space.”
- “The verge of sleep was always terrifying for Nicholas.”
- “breaking down syllables and walking around them...picking up one he fancies for a moment, the replacing it with another.”
- It was the “spell of language” that brought him to Canada.
- “Nicholas Temelcoff never looks back.”
- He is isolated due to his lack of language. No power, no light, no knowledge.
- The people he worked with on the bridge barely knew him. This once again shows his solitary nature.
- “He releases the catch on the pulley and slides free of the bridge.”

Role in the Novel:

He is a worker on the bridge who swings on the pulley system, flying around attaching bolts, rivets and screws that others dare not. He earns \$1 an hour and \$1.25 at night. He catches the nun (Alice Gull), saving her life when she falls off the bridge in the dead of night.

One year later, Nicholas opens a bakery with the money he has earned. He calls it the *Geranium Bakery*.

Whilst working as a baker, Nicholas acts as a guardian to Alice’s daughter, Hana. He works with Patrick to help find Alice and calms Patrick following Alice’s death.

Impact:

Temelcoff realises his place in history. He realises that he will have to pass down his story himself. He realises official history will not remember him.

- “Patrick’s gift, that arrow into the past, shows him the wealth in himself, how he has been sewn into history.”
- “Each person had their moment when they assumed the skins of wild animals, when they took responsibility for the story.”