

DOWNHILL

after leaving the motel i lived with a nurse for a few years. mornings she'd be out early, off to the hospital, and i'd spend the day alone at the kitchen table, scribbling mostly, in a battered and torn notebook, or just staring out the window at a crucifix which rose above an entirely uninspired clutter of old buildings. it was on one of the many churches which can be found in that neighborhood of that rather small city. i don't have much in the way of writing from those days. most written stuff landed in a diary, which i haven't placed my eyes on since putting in the last entry. i remember easily getting used to those white uniforms of professional care hanging in the bathroom, especially the stockings. the room had a very determined brightness about it which made me feel safe from all kinds of concerns. having been brought up in a catholic school i've always had an eager eye for the uniform, having watched so many girls grow up in them. when this lovely nurse of cheerful demeanor and quick step eventually became supervisor of nursing, and wasn't required to wear a uniform anymore, our relationship slowly started heading downhill. of course it was more than that, that almost goes without saying. we just were not kindred spirits, not destined to share the same old age together. and, sure, i couldn't take the sound of her mother's voice for one more second of one more visit. always questioning me about my intentions, always pointing out the finer aspects of her daughter's being. and then there was that thanksgiving when her mother insisted on leaving the turkey in the oven until it was savagely transformed into a mound of tasteless splinters. but, sometimes time marches in your favor. she's married now (the lovely nurse, not her mother, god forbid). married some electrician in town, and sometimes i see them having breakfast at the bus stop. they seem like a happy enough couple. i like eating at the bus stop myself. one of the waitresses there reads chekov when it's slow.