

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.