

in a shower of insults, one rained on a raw nerve and became the injustice to end all injustices. Really the man has little to do with the existence I am locked into. It is a struggle to stay on course, so much of it uncharted.

I think about the fight again, testing my timing, retesting each movement and decision.

I am thinking I have until next week to find another job. Otherwise the landlord and phone company will come down on me with the swiftness of a guillotine.

I think how nice it would be to unzip my body from forehead to navel and go on vacation. But there is no escaping it, I'd have to pack myself along.

I turn my life over in my mind like a smooth stone slipped into my pocket whose texture I know in its every detail by touch.

I open my eyes. The train is nearly empty. I am facing a woman holding a child on her lap. Her arms are folded across him. They are of the same dark skin and equally as handsome. Their faces together, they are running with sweat like a river down one body.

All our eyes meet in one moment. I smile warmly, without restraint. His eyes look up at hers. She returns the smile in kind.

I am sorry when they get off at the next stop.

My thoughts wander unfocused but find their way again and again to the fight on the train. Then something nudges me to smile:

I have lost more battles than I care to count. I could write a volume on the art of retreat. This is not an easy life. It is a struggle to survive. It is a fight.

But I have survived. It's a fight that I am winning.