

Calm Face

by Bud Smith

1. A man doing push ups on the sidewalk outside the homeless shelter, looks fit, looks happy.
2. My winter coat will no longer button up, I'm solving that problem by picking random cards out of a hat and doing whatever the card says to do. This card says, '9 of Diamonds.'
3. I'm crossing the street now because I forgot to order coffee with the rest of my groceries.
4. I've got to walk twelve blocks to buy a sack of coffee, I'm not troubled by this. I've come to accept my fate as 'man walking down the sidewalk at 8am to buy coffee'.
5. Woman walking down the street swinging her arms and singing, has a paperback book in one hand.
6. Another woman not swinging arms and not singing, actually, weeping, leans against the metal box that used to house a payphone, her hands are empty.
7. Conclusion: the weeping woman needs a paperback book
8. City bus almost runs me over. Bus driver has calm face. I have calm face. All bus passengers have calm face. We're all good here.
9. I don't wear a scarf because I don't want the scarf getting sucked into the gears of a machine and having my face and neck ripped off and my head crunched in the gears of the machine.
10. Cop at silver, smoke-billowing Halal cart is eating lamb kabobs at 8:05 am and I wonder if he is on night shift and this is his dinner or if he is a psychopath.
11. I give five dollars to girl begging for change outside coffee shop. I also give her a '9 of diamonds' playing card. I also ask her if she would like a warm winter coat. I explain that

my winter coat doesn't fit me anymore because either, I'm becoming a fat motherfucker, or, the coat is somehow shrinking.

12. She declines the coat. But laughs.
13. Kid at coffee counter is bewildered.
14. Kid at counter doesn't know what 'Percolator' means.
15. I'm trying to get him to grind a bag of coffee beans for me.
16. He's still bewildered.
17. "Like those silver pots that the cowboys stuck in the campfire and boiled over the flames. That's what it is."
18. "You have a campfire in your apartment?"
19. "Fuck yeah."
20. A man on line behind me is annoyed and tells the kid, "Just grind it as coarse as you can, that's what percolator means."
21. I say to the annoyed man, "You need to find yourself a paperback book to hold in your hand. That will cheer you up."
22. On the way back, forty girls in track clothes are jogging down the sidewalk. They all have the same pony tail and head band.
23. The pony tails and head bands must make them fast.
24. There's some big race, a collegiate race happening at the New Balance Track and Field track on Fort Washington Avenue.
25. I own a pair of New Balance sneakers too.
26. I'm slow as fuck though. And once got mud all over my shoes and my wife said, "Oh man, those were nice shoes. They cost \$160."
27. "160 dollar sneakers that look ugly and have mud all over them?"
28. "Hahahah, true. Who cares?"
29. Last week I did the brakes in my car and got oil all over them. She'll never buy me expensive sneakers again that look like regular cheap crappy sneakers.

30. Update: The cop is gone from the Halal cart. I never see him again for the rest of my life.
31. Update: A man walking a dalmatian looks pissed that he ever got a dalmatian entered into his life. He yells, "JUST SHIT!"
32. Traffic is backed up on 169th street. Someone who did not remain calm probably got ran over by a city bus. I don't walk down 169th street, I just imagine the bus driver, still cool, still calm, scraping the body off the front of the bus. Maybe somebody's scarf sucked into the grill of the bus, face and head and neck pulled into the engine. Oh Jesus.
33. Guy formerly doing push ups outside homeless shelter is now sitting on steps, listening to head phones.
34. Oh wait, there he goes, he was resting between sets. He is now doing pull ups on a scaffolding.
35. I estimate that I can do three pull ups. I watch him do sixteen, then sit back down again.
36. "That's a good work out," I say.
37. "Wuuh?" He lowers his headphones.
38. "That's a good work out," I say.
39. "Pushups, pull ups, sit ups, running, stairs and jumping high and ... shit, hold on ..." He leaps up and does sixteen more pull ups, but I keep walking.
40. I'm gonna leave this too-small coat on the radiator when I get back. Someone will take it.
41. I cross through the park but the park is empty and ominous because it's 22 degrees. Everything is ominous when it's 22 degrees.
42. In the apartment building I take the stairs three at a time. That's my big work out.
43. I percolate the coffee. It's an electric pot.
44. I pull another card out of the hat. This card is '3 of Spades.'
45. When I bring the coffee in and set it on my wife's night stand, she is still asleep and sweaty, and the coffee steams.

46. Later today, I decide, I'm going to make a camp fire in this apartment, for the first time, ever.
47. I move to the floor. I do four pushups. I breathe heavy. I switch to my back. I do ten sit ups. I huff and puff. My wife wakes up, 'What's happening?'
48. "Keeping the coat," I say.

