

Will Baker

writes creative nonfiction. He was this magazine's first assigned foreign correspondent, reporting on Nicaragua at length in issues 45 and 46. Author of *Backward: An Essay on Indians, Time and Photography among other books.*

I herewith pass along survival lessons learned from my new son, Cole Baker, during his first year of this life. He has given valuable instruction on how to handle advanced Industrial States, now perfecting their techniques for controlling the citizen and gutting the planet.

1. Observe carefully everything that comes within range.
2. If the approaching being is animate, smile at it. If it smiles back, give it a pinch. If it pinches back, smooch it. If it smooches back good, keep it around indefinitely.
3. If the object is inanimate, touch it, smell it, taste it, and strike it several times with a blunt instrument. If it is not gratifying to the senses or does not soothe the mind, throw it away. If it persists in returning, beat the shit out of it.
4. If several large beings collect around you and urge you to do something, consider this something with *special* care. If they want you to eat something that tastes bad, spit it out. If they want you to wear something uncomfortable and ugly (like a uniform), tear it up and throw it in the dirt. If they want you to say something you don't want to say, sing them a song, and if they don't like that, find something they *don't* want you to say and scream it at the top of your lungs for as long as you can.
5. If the Largies try to restrain you or put you in a cage, sing them another song. If they don't release you, piss on them, and keep an eye out for a blunt instrument.
6. If you are repeatedly restrained, smile and appear to go along with the latest Largie plan. Secretly remain, however, a cunning, domineering little asshole and watch for a moment when you are left alone near a valuable, fragile object.
7. If the Largies give you everything you want, take it of course, but piss on them now and then anyway.
8. If they insist that you accompany them to their endless meetings, conferences, parties, etc., learn to fall asleep instantly and fart at will.
9. Learn a complicated series of gestures to make, in case you are at a big gathering of Largies and feel forgotten: imitate Hitler, Leonard Bernstein, someone with muscular dystrophy, The Incredible Hulk, and Marx (Harpo). When all attention is focused on you, take down your pants or blow spit bubbles.
10. After a hard day of applying these lessons, eat and drink all you want, sing some more songs, and find one of the Largies who hangs around a lot calling you precious darling; try to get them into bed beside you and indicate by clear gesture the parts of yourself you want nuzzled before you go sleepy-by. ■



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