

Idiom by Lon Yan

神色自若

shen2 se4 zi4 ruo4

Tornados are deadly. They suck up houses, people and animals, and spit them out miles away. So when a tornado comes, you run or hide.

But not the Calgary man in a picture that has gone viral online. In it, he was seen mowing his backyard lawn, leisurely, as the dark funnel of a twister loomed ominously close. The man, dubbed the "Mowing Man" was reported to be "causing a bit of a storm himself on the social media."

The picture was taken by his wife, one Cecilia Wessels, after she was roused from sleep by her nine-year-old daughter, who was appropriately alarmed when her father refused to come inside.

The man told reporters the tornado was farther away than it looked, and that he was "keeping an eye on it." Tornado or not, the mowing had to be done, as it was on his to-

do list. The idiom to describe the man in the picture is "神色自若" (*shen2 se4 zi4 ruo4*).

"神色" (*shen2 se4*) is "an expression," "look" and "自若" (*zi4 ruo4*) is "self-possessed," "composed," "collected," "calm and at ease." Literally, "神色自若" (*shen2 se4 zi4 ruo4*) is "the expression is calm and at ease," "looking calm."

The idiom means "perfect composure," "calm and collected." It is used to describe people who are unperturbed in disturbing circumstances.

People usually are upset and look upset in upsetting situations, and being "神色自若" (*shen2 se4 zi4 ruo4*) is not normal human reaction. "神色自若" (*shen2 se4 zi4 ruo4*) in a dangerous or threatening situation means the person is well-trained and has the situation under control, an idiot, or insane!

Terms containing the character "神" (*shen2*) include:

神秘 (*shen2 mi4*) – mysterious; mystery

神奇 (*shen2 qi2*) – magical, miraculous

神聖 (*shen2 sheng4*) – sacred; holy

神態 (*shen2 tai4*) – expression; manner; appearance