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Preliminary communication

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THE DICTIONARY OF MODERN PROVERBS: FIFTH SUPPLEMENT

Abstract: This is the fifth supplement to *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2012), edited by Charles Clay Doyle, Wolfgang Mieder, and Fred R. Shapiro. It registers 49 additional modern Anglo-American proverbs with historical dates and contextualized instances.

Keywords: American, Anglo-American, British, dictionary, modern paremiography, proverbs.

Since the publication of our first, second, third, and fourth supplements to *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* (New Haven CT: Yale UP, 2012) in *Proverbium* 33 (2016) 85-120, 35 (2018) 15-44, 37 (2020) 53-86, and 39 (2022) 86-119, we have continued to gather addenda. As before, we must credit a lot of help from our vigilant friends, kinspersons, students, professional acquaintances, and strangers. Among those who have assisted, in direct and indirect ways, two individuals stand out: Fred R. Shapiro, our collaborator on the dictionary itself and author of the magisterial *New Yale Book of Quotations* (2021), and Garson O'Toole, whose "Quote Investigator" website (quoteinvestigator.com) comprises a continually expanding and meticulously researched repository of early datings for fixed expressions, including antedatings for some of our entries in *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs*.

Of the recent addenda we have on file, the following are among the most prevalently encountered. As in *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* itself, we have included only “true proverbs,” as folklorists term them—that is, “propositional” sentences (occasionally, elliptical sentences), not mere phrases or similes or wellerisms or sarcastic interrogatives. A “modern proverb,” for our purposes, means one that originated no earlier than 1900, as far as we have been able to ascertain.

A reminder: The *key word* of a proverb, which governs the alphabetical placement of its entry, does not necessarily point to the “subject” or “theme” of the proverb; it is simply the *first noun* (in its singular form) present in the proverb as most commonly phrased (or, if no noun occurs, then the first *finite verb*).

ADVERSITY brings out the best in us.

1902 D. L. Hill, “Act Well Your Part,” *The Frater* 2, no. 1 (Nov.), 8: “. . . [D]id you ever think that adversity brings out the best in us and makes us try harder? Then a conscientious dentist will investigate, and will not be satisfied until he knows how to remedy his own defects . . .” **1911** E. G. Aaker, “To the Stockholders of the Hatton Farmers Elevator Company,” *American Co-Operative Journal* 6, no. 12 (Aug.), 989: “. . . [A]s adversity brings out the best there is in a man, so does hard competition spur on and bring out the best ability in a business man.” **1960** John F. Kennedy, speech in Manchester, NH, 2 Sep., *The Speeches, Remarks, Press Conferences, and Statements of Senator John F. Kennedy* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office), 82: “There is an old axiom that adversity brings out the best . . . [A]nd because the adversity has dealt hard blows to the Democrats of this State, you have chosen the best possible candidates, and I am delighted and proud to be running with them.” **2005** George W. Bush, “Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents,” *Washington* (magazine) 41, no. 37 (19 Sep.), 1380: “Hurricane Katrina flattened entire towns Once more, our hearts ache for our fellow citizens Yet we are being reminded that adversity brings out the best in the American spirit.”

AGE is not (is more than) just a number.

1999 Matthew Lippman, *Criminal Procedure* (Thousand Oaks CA: SAGE), 364: “An I. Q. score, like age, is more than just a number.” **2005** *Home News Tribune* (East Brunswick NJ), 27 May: “To the [elliptical trainer] machine, age is not ‘just a number.’ It is an important part of the equation.” **2007** Laurice V. Hunter-Scott, *Inspiration, Reflection, Recollection* (Bloomington IN: Author House), 36 (poem): “Age is not just a number / For at different ages you must pause and wonder.” **2018** *Sunday Nation* (Nairobi), 30 Dec: “. . . [T]he court ruled that amending the age law would result in several undesirable legal and societal implications The court seemed to be saying, age is not just a number.” The proverb probably originated as a counter-proverb in response to the consoling “Age is just a number.”

One rotten (bad) APPLE does not spoil the whole barrel (bushel).

1990 *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, 7 Sep.: “Good people . . . served to remind me that ‘one rotten apple does not spoil the barrel.’” **1999** *Asbury Park (NJ) Press*, 21 July: “Punish those who err, but one apple does not make an entire bad bushel.” **2002** *Daily Journal* (Vineland NJ), 31 July: “Contrary to popular belief, one rotten apple does not spoil the bunch.” **2012** *The Courier (Brisbane, QLD)*, 15 Nov.: “One rotten apple does not spoil the barrel. It just makes it harder to see the good fruit.” The proverb probably originated as a counter proverb responding to “One rotten apple will spoil the whole barrel.”

You have to take the BAD with the good.

1912 Irving E. Long, letter to the editor, *American Bee Journal* 52, no. 2 (Feb.), 56: We must take the bad with the good in this life, and be thankful [,] for it might be much worse.” **1949** Junius B. Wood, “Cartels Could Strangle America,” *Nation’s Business* 37, no. 5 (May), 67: A buyer must take the bad with the good in a package so the syndicate will not be stuck with inferior stones.” **1980** *New York Times*, 21 Aug.: “But these are difficult times for America and we must be prepared to take the bad with the good.”

1986 *Toronto Star*, 18 May: “In a larger context, a moral one, we might learn the lesson that one must take the bad with the good.”

Kill the BODY, and the head will die.

1971 Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (New York: Random House), 22: “‘KILL THE BODY AND THE HEAD WILL DIE’ This line appears in my notebook, for some reason. Perhaps some connection with Joe Frazier. Is he still alive?” (capitalization as shown). **1982** *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 16 Nov.: “The old sages of boxing will nod wisely and say: ‘You kill the body, and the head will die.’” **1992** *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 12 Sep.: “One of the oldest axioms in the fight game is kill the body and the head will die.” **2006** Kevin Chong, “Pursuing Structure in Boxing and Architecture,” *Books in Canada* 35, no. 2 (Mar.), 13: “. . . ‘Kill the body and the head will die.’ This is an admonition against the very common beginner practice of focusing the assault only on the opponent’s head.”

No BODY (No corpse), no murder.

1925 Mary Roberts Rinehart, *The Red Lamp* (New York: A. L. Burt), 233: “Then—he simply got into the car and drove away. Cool and crafty to the last. No body, no murder.” **1931** Erle Stanley Gardner, “The Vanishing Corpse,” *Detective Fiction Weekly*, 15 Aug.; Quoted from Gardner, *The Case of the Crying Swallow, A Perry Mason Novelette and Other Stories* (New York: William Morrow, 1971), 136: “Happened to read a detective story a few days ago that mentioned the point. I asked a lawyer friend about it He said it was so. No corpse, no murder, no murder, no conviction. That’s the law.” **2014** *Daily Telegraph* (London), 9 Feb.: “‘Perhaps familiar with the old mafia adage “no body, no murder,” the woman began frantically eating the rolls,’ the newspaper reported.” **2020** Rey Elbo, “Sexual Harassment Exposed in a Poison-Pen Letter,” *Business World* (online), 27 Nov.: “The principle in law, justice, and fair play is that if there’s no victim, no offense was committed. In other words, no corpse, no murder.”

CAREGIVERS need care (too).

1987 *St. Petersburg (FL) Times*, 20 Oct.: “[section heading and opening sentence] Caregivers need care, too [.] Caring for an elderly person—especially an Alzheimer’s or memory loss victim—only gets harder if you are doing it in isolation.” **1988** Lynn Osterkamp, “Family Caregivers,” *Aging* [magazine; U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, no. 358], 3: “‘Caregivers need care too!’ Such familiar slogans reflect the recent emphasis on the needs of American families caring for elderly relatives.” **1992** *Boston Globe*, 31 Mar.: “Some suggestions and resources are found in ‘Caregivers Need Care Too,’ a free consumer information booklet.” **2022** *This Day* (Lagos, Nigeria), 9 Oct.: “According to him [Jehovah’s Witness spokesman Olusegun Eroyemi], there is a lack of awareness about mental health Mental health can be managed, and caregivers need care.”

In CHAOS (there) is opportunity.

1987 *Los Angeles Times*, 24 May: “The anticipated problems [of the University of California’s acquiring a new telescope] seemed overwhelming. On the other hand, in chaos there is opportunity.” **2001** *Wall Street Journal*, Eastern Edition [New York], 13 Apr.: “Art buyers and sellers need to remember the old saying: In chaos, there is opportunity.” **2004** *Atlanta Journal*, 17 Jun.: “If [civil rights leader] Joe Beasley could pick a motto, it might be this: In chaos, there is opportunity.” **2021** Carole L. Worthington, “Stronger Together,” *Experience: The Magazine of the Senior Lawyers Division, American Bar Association* 32, no. 1 (Sep./Oct.), 3: “It’s important to remember that in chaos is opportunity. Our recent experiences with COVID-19 forced us to move rapidly ahead to working effectively on a remote basis.”

Let your CONSCIENCE be your guide.

1923 First Lieut. Henry F. Adams . . . to Marine Barracks, San Diego, “Some Observations on Kissing a Girl,” *Leatherneck* (Quantico VA) 6, no. 12 (24 Mar.), 7: “. . . Use your own judgment and let your conscience be your guide.” **1940** *Pinocchio*

(Disney motion picture; the Blue Fairy speaks): “Now remember, Pinocchio: be a good boy. And always let your conscience be your guide.” **1952** *Changing Times* (magazine) (Washington) 6, no. 5 (May), 2 (anonymous front matter): “The trouble with letting your conscience be your guide is that the darned thing knows only the dull places.” **2018** *Herald Sun* (Melbourne, Australia), 19 Dec.: “The proverb ‘Let your conscience be your guide’ seems almost to be non-existent in this day and age.”

CONTROL what you can control.

1992 John E. Newman, *How to Stay Cool, Calm, and Collected When the Pressure Is On* (New York: Amacom), 23: “The guiding principle of this ‘make choices and take action’ approach to dealing with problems and stress is: *control what you can control*” (italics as shown). **1997** *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis), 7 Dec.: “There’s an old saying, ‘Control what you can control.’ That’s hard work and effort.” **2017** Roberet Pawlicki, *Control What You Can Control: A Path to Happiness* (Scotts Valley CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform). **2021** *Des Moines Register*, 7 June: “. . . [Coach Matt Pries] offered up a time-honored coaching adage: ‘Control what you can control.’”

The COST (price) of freedom is high (Freedom does not come cheap).

1957 *Marine Corps Gazette* (Quantico VA) 41, no. 8 (Aug), 15: (Congressman Carl Vinson, Democrat of Georgia, speaks) “The price of freedom is high, but the cost of defeat is beyond description.” **1960** *Life* (magazine) 48, no. 9 (7 Mar.), 8: “An open letter to John Wayne on the occasion of the 124th Anniversary of the Alamo; 6 March 1969. We believe with you that the world—and our own nation—needs [sic] to be reminded that freedom does not come cheap and easy.” **1961** John F. Kennedy, speech in Chapel Hill NC, 22 Oct., *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), 1:668: “Peace and freedom do not come cheap, and we are destined . . . to live out most if not all our lives in uncertainty and challenge and peril.” **2019** *Sunday Independ-*

ent (Dublin), 11 Aug.: “The cost of freedom is always high but Irish people have always paid it. One path we never choose is the path of surrender and submission, and we are not going to do so now, Brexit or no Brexit.”

Keep your EYE on the ball.

1921 *Baron's* (Boston) 1, no. 24 (17 Oct.), 11: “He [Eugene G. Grace] plays [golf] close to par and never has to be reminded no [sic, for *to*] ‘Keep his eye on the ball’” **1926** Arthur Royce MacDonald, “Opportunity Comes to Getsital,” *Nation's Business* (Washington) 14, no. 4 (Apr.) 20: “‘Keep your eye on the ball! Play your [golf] shots!’ . . . Apply that to business.” **1997** *Daily News* (Los Angeles), 15 Apr.: “There’s an old baseball adage, ‘Keep your eye on the ball.’ Chaminade’s Tyler Dersom and Burroughs’ Anthony Fabrizio won’t ever forget it after escaping serious injury when each lost sight of the ball during practice last week.” **2015** *Limerick Leader* (Ireland), 12 Apr.: “[Golfer] Bob Jones’s wisdom is fit for the ages ‘I have found little value in the maxim “keep your eye on the ball.” Think of staying down to the ball.’”

FAILURE is the best teacher.

1990 *San Diego Tribune*, 19 Nov.: “Maybe failure is the best teacher I was lucky enough to meet people who taught me to rebuild my life.” **2006** *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News* (Washington), 11 Apr.: “They say failure is the best teacher Failure brings to light things that are overlooked if you are succeeding.” **2012** *Times-Transcript* (Moncton NB), 13 Oct.: “It makes me wonder: If failure is the best teacher, then why are we pressured to succeed?” **2017** *Jordan Times* (Amman), 28 Feb.: “For his part, Marwan Juma, chairman of start-up incubator Oasis 500, said failure is the best teacher for entrepreneurs”

Not all GIFTS (presents) are (come) wrapped (in shiny paper).

2000 *Daily Breeze* (Torrance CA), 25 Dec.: “Not all gifts are wrapped up nicely under the Christmas Tree. Some gifts are

always there, right in front of us.” **2004** *Daytona Beach [FL] News-Journal*, 26 Dec.: “Not all gifts come wrapped in colored paper and ribbons. Gifts come in all sizes from many sources.” **2009** *Stuart [FL] News*, 29 Dec.: “This holiday season let’s remember that not all gifts are wrapped in shiny paper and decorated with ribbon and bows. There are many intangible gifts” **2012** *Daily News* [Bowling Green KY], 18 Dec.: “Not all presents come wrapped. Help people you love discover the towns they love.”

The hurrier (hurrieder) you GO, the behinder you get.

1962 “What They’re Saying,” *Advertising Age* 33, no. 21 (21 May), 20: “The cleaning woman quit. She said, ‘The hurrier you go, the behinder you get.’” **1998** *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 4 Feb.: “Mrs. [June Christman] Santmyer was remembered for making pronouncements that sometimes sounded odd, reflecting her Pennsylvania Dutch roots, such as . . . ‘The hurrier you go, the behinder you get.’” **2000** “Money: Strategies for Putting Your Plan on Course,” *Consumer Reports* 65, no. 2 (Feb.), 56: “Even parents who set their sights on a lower-cost state school can barely manage to save enough to keep pace with college-cost inflation. As they say, ‘The hurrieder you go, the behinder you get.’” **2021** *The Gleaner* (Henderson KY), 9 June: “Then I heard Grandma speak, ‘The hurrieder you go, the behinder you get.’ Take a breath and stay calm.”

When (If) they GO low, go high.

2016 *Targeted News Service* (Washington DC) 27 July (U.S. Department of State Foreign Press Center briefing, Brian Fallon speaking): “She [Michelle Obama] described the approach that she and President Obama take as when they go low, go high. And that’s for the most part the approach we’ve taken.” **2020** Susanne Tedrick, *Women of Color in Tech* (Indianapolis: Wiley), xiii: “When they go low, go high. . . . [D]on’t match a bully’s bad actions with your own bad actions. Engaging in bad behavior of your own may only lead to you being disciplined.” **2020** *Green Bay Press Gazette*, 13 Aug.: “So maybe the next step for

[basketball player Giannis] Antetokounmpo—forget the 3-pointers, stop worrying about the free throws—is to channel that fury. Ignore all the admonishing. And then, in the game, and always in life, when they go low . . . Go high” (ellipsis dots and capitalization as shown). **2016** *Canberra Times*, 15 Nov. (column by Jenna Price): “I’m taking the advice of both Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton. When they go low, go high. In other words, turn the other cheek.”

When (If) they go low, go lower.

2017 *Star-Phoenix* (Saskatoon), 17 June: “He [Gavin McInnes, head of the right-wing Proud Boys militia organization] has pledged to fight back against violence from leftist activists . . . ‘When they go low, go lower. Mace ’em back. Throw bricks at their head. Let’s destroy them.’” **2019** *Herald Sun* (Melbourne, Australia), 7 Apr.: “Barnaby [Joyce] went low and Natalie [Joyce] went high. Inspiring, especially as my own approach is ‘When they go low, go lower’ and this usually involves bad-mouthing exes and late-night drive bys of their homes.” **2019** *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* (Fort Lauderdale), 30 Sep.: “It’s not the players [sic] or coaches [sic] fault for what’s happening It’s part of the tanking plan. Motto: ‘If they go low, we go lower.’” **2020** *Irish Independent* (Dublin), 26 June (summarizing the plot of an American TV movie): “Faith Brewster . . . has a history with Gary [Zimmer] . . . , but she’s a remorseless campaigner whose motto seems to be: if they go low, we go lower.” “When they go low, go lower” probably originated as an anti-proverb responding to “When they go low, we go high.”

God gives the hardest (toughest) battles to the strongest (bravest) soldiers.

2013 *Ashville [NC] Citizen-Times*, 8 Sep.: “As Jeff’s mother puts it, ‘God gives the hardest battles to the bravest soldiers.’ They are called heroes.” **2013** Courtney Lynne, *In the Nick of Time* (Bloomington IN: Author House), 115: “A friend of mine passed a little saying on to me, . . . and it said, ‘God gives his toughest battles to his strongest soldiers.’” **2015** *Messenger-In-*

quirer (Owensboro KY), 28 Feb.: “It takes time, but you will get through it I also remembered that God gives the hardest battles to his strongest soldiers.” **2021** *Times of India* (New Delhi), 23 July: “But like they say, God gives the hardest battles to his strongest soldiers.”

You can't HIT what you can't see.

1925 Philo Sopher, “You Can't Hit What You Can't See: Another One of the Practical Talks,” *Popular Health Dental Supplement* 1, no. 8 (Dec.), 9: “In the first game of the World Series, [the pitcher] Walter Johnson showed that he still had plenty of that terrific speed which caused the Pirates to say as they went back to the bench after taking three healthy swings at the ball—‘Well, you can't hit what you can't see.’” **1993** Dennis Margheim, “Set Your Sights for the New Year,” *USAREC Recruiter Journal* (Public Affairs Office, U.S. Army Recruiting Command) 46, no. 9 (Sep.), 4: “Your experience should tell you that you can't hit what you can't see. Unless you know what your goals are . . . , you'll never be able to achieve them.” **2005** *Daily Herald* (Arlington Heights IL), 13 June: “There's an old baseball adage that goes, ‘you can't hit what you can't see,’ or for the Cubs, you can't hit what you've never seen before.” **2012** *San Francisco Chronicle*, 6 July: “As they say in baseball, you can't hit what you can't see. [Tennis star Serena] Williams' 6-3, 7-6 (6) win was punctuated by 24 Aces. . . .”

You can't ride two HORSES with one behind (butt, ass).

1984 *Philadelphia Daily News*, 14 Feb.: “Take my aunt Rose. . . . [S]he always said, ‘You can't ride two horses with one behind.’” **1988** *Sun Sentinel* (Ft. Lauderdale), 15 Mar.: “‘A friend told me that you can't ride two horses with one butt,’ [Jakey] Winters said. ‘But I feel that . . . I never had a fair shot to become a successful fighter.’” **2000** *The Scotsman* (Edinburgh), 20 Jan.: . . . [T]he MP elegantly states: ‘Last May at Nottingham I reminded you of the old political advice that it is not possible to ride two horses with one arse in a three ring circus.’” **2014** *Statesman Journal* (Salem OR), 23 Jan.: “I originally balked at the idea of

using two [fishing] rods under the old maxim that ‘you can’t ride two horses with one butt.’”

First IMPRESSIONS are (often) fleeting.

1926 *Pioneer Mail and Indian Weekly News* (Allahabad, India), 23 Apr.: “First impressions are fleeting and therefore precious.”

1988 *Chicago Tribune*, 6 Nov.: “But first impressions are fleeting. On the second date she stopped seeing the outside of the package and started seeing the inside.” **1999** *Sunday Gazette Mail* (Charleston WV), 24 Jan.: “But first impressions are often fleeting, says [Cindy] Adams, a senior squad leader The ones who struggle at first sometimes blossom.” **2011** *Journal News* (White Plains NY), 11 Dec.: “His varsity debut arrived last season First impressions are often fleeting. Not this one.” The proverb probably originated as a counter-proverb responding to “First impressions are (the most) lasting.”

The INTERNET is forever.

1997 Jeffrey P. Zeleski, *The Soul of Cyberspace: How New Technology Is Changing Our Spiritual Lives* (New York: Harper), 112: “. . . [T]he Internet is forever—or at least for as long as humanity rides the technological juggernaut.” **2008** Andrew Whelan, *Breakcore: Identity and Interaction on Peer-to-Peer* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars), 320: “People are now beginning to realize that all the chat room and email play that they engage in . . . is archived and retrievable. ‘The internet is forever,’ and so is whatever you do on or through it.”

2015 *Western Star* (Corner Brook NL), 29 May: “The last straw . . . was a comment from [Deborah] Drever’s deactivated Instagram account Proof positive that the saying ‘The Internet is forever’ holds true.” **2018** Kahyun Yoon-Flannery et al., *A Surgeon’s Path: What to Expect after a General Surgery Residency* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer), 288: “The recurring theme of this chapter, and the major warning regarding the use of the Internet for professional activity (or any activity), is *the Internet is forever*. ¶ Forever. ¶ No, really, FOREVER” (uppercase and italics and as shown).

LIFE is (about) context (Everything in life is about context).

1986 Kenneth L. Pike, “On the Value of Local Languages,” in *Languages in the International Perspective*, edited by Nancy Schweda Nicholson, (Norwood NJ: Ablex), 13 (section heading): “Life Is Context; Autonomy Is Death.” **1990** Carl Bernstein, “And What about the Truth?” [that is, the truth regarding Donald Trump’s accomplishments], *Time* (magazine) 135, no. 10 (5 Mar.) 52: “Real life is about context. So is real journalism.” **2007** Sarah Ruhl, *The Clean House*, in *The Clean House and Other Plays* (New York: Samuel French), 12: “You sound like an interesting woman. But life is about context. And I have . . . hired you to clean my house. And I don’t want an interesting person to clean my house.” **2013** *Nelson Mail* (New Zealand), 12 July: “. . . I would argue that all in life is about context, and that most individuals draw on their past experiences automatically when they read or listen.”

Don’t LOOK, won’t find.

1987 Dean R. Koontz, “Twilight of the Dawn,” in *Night Visions 4*, edited by Clive Barker (Arlington Heights IL: Dark Harvest), 95-96: “‘Daddy . . . if only . . . you’d look for us? . . . just look for us . . . you’ll find us . . .’ . . . ‘Don’t look . . . won’t find . . .’” (the ellipsis dots are as shown). **2011** *Townsville Bulletin* (Queensland, Australia) 11 Aug.: “. . . [W]hen the National Party in late 2009 alerted [Prime Minister Julia] Gillard to the dying at sea then thought to be just 25 and blamed in part the policies she’s personally helped, she accused it of a ‘vile slur’ and snapped ‘There is no evidence to support this figure,’ [¶] Course not. Don’t look, won’t find.” **2015** *Daily Mirror* (London), 29 Dec.: “Money laundering rules are weak and there is a lack of awareness of how to prevent it, according to Transparency International UK’s ‘Don’t Look, Won’t Find’ report.” **2022** David Quammen, *Breathless: The Scientific Race to Defeat a Deadly Virus* (New York: Simon & Schuster), 143: “‘We couldn’t test [for the Covid virus]! Don’t look, won’t find.’ Venting frustrations, she repeated the axiom: ‘*Don’t look, won’t find*’” (italics as shown).

A MAN is not a plan.

1999 *Los Angeles Times*, 13 July: “‘A man is not a plan,’ [Victoria] Collins affirmed. [Joanne] Baker, who frequently relies on her fiancé for financial advice, agreed.” **2003** *New York Times*, 4 May: “. . . [E]xperts advise women to take a more active role in family financial matters. ‘A man is not a plan’ Ms. [Ginita] Wall said.” **2019** Jeanette Marais, “Does Finance Have a Woman Problem?” *Investment Week* (London), 2 Dec., 22: “To my mind ‘a man is not a plan’—women need plans of their own.” **2024** *Washington Post*, 16 Feb. (title of the article): “‘A Man Is Not a Plan’: Fani Willis on Dating and Money.”

MAN plans, God laughs.

1975 John F. Kantner and Lee McCaffrey, editors, *Population and Development in Southeast Asia* (Lexington MA: Heath), x: “There is no need to confine this generalization to efforts concerned with public weal. As the saying has it generally ‘Man plans, God laughs.’” **2002** *South Bend [IN] Tribune*, 8 May: “They . . . planned on having four children We plan, God laughs Now . . . they are thrilled with their seven daughters and have stopped thinking about sons.” **2017** *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 31 Dec.: “If you believe the adage, ‘Man plans, God laughs,’ then waiting to see how everything unfolds might be the most tempting path.” **2024** *Jerusalem Post*, 31 Mar.: “But the old adage ‘Man plans, God laughs,’ could be recorded as ‘Man plans, Supernova has poor timing,’ because it came at a very inconvenient moment.” The saying in English is a calque of an equivalent Yiddish expression.

A bad (loveless, broken) MARRIAGE is still a marriage.

1996 Ryan Mathews, “The High Cost of Discarded Dreams,” *Progressive Grocer* 75, no. 11 (Nov.), 23: “A loveless marriage is still a marriage, but it’s a terrible place for a romantic to live.” **1999** Christopher Berry Gray, *The Philosophy of Law* (New York: Garland) 2:827: “A bad marriage is still a marriage, and a broken promise is still a promise.” **2006** Leo Zaibert, *Punish-*

ment and Retribution (Aldershot UK: Ashgate), 144: “Similarly for countless other things: a malfunctioning liver is still a liver, an unjustified claim is still a claim, a bad marriage is still a marriage . . . and so on.” **2023** Karin Slaughter, *After That Night* (New York: HarperCollins), 8: “Obviously, Mom was no help . . . All she said was ‘A bad marriage is still a marriage.’ What does that even mean?”

The MIND goes (will go) where it goes.

2012 *News Gazette* (Champaign IL), 1 Mar.: “I start cranking out the chords. I’ve felt pressure to stay within Celtic bounds, but it doesn’t always work out that way. Try as you might, your mind goes where it goes.” **2013** Harlan Coben, *Six Years* (New York: Dutton), 34: “Why does everyone make pouty lips and hand gestures in photographs nowadays? . . . Dumb thought, but the mind goes where it goes.” **2014** Lisa Winning and Carrie Henderson McDermott, *He Texted Me: The Ultimate Guide to Decoding Guys* (New York: Simon and Schuster), 33: “I . . . made a lot of sweeping assumptions about her that might not have been true, but the mind goes where it goes.” **2019** *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 30 June: “In its own way it [distance running] is a spiritual experience, he [Father Lawrence Schottelkatte] said. ‘The mind will go where it goes. In my situation, sometimes it will go to prayer.’”

“NO” means (stands for) “New Opportunity”.

2008 Herbert C. Long, *Built Stronger* (Maitland FL: Xulon), xiii: “Ten Power Quotes of Encouragement . . . ‘NO’ stands for New Opportunity.” **2013** *Derry Journal* (UK), 3 Jan.: “My husband thinks that the word ‘no’ means ‘new opportunity’, [Roma] Downy outlined what she said was [her husband Mark] Burnett’s perseverance to raise money” **2016** *TCA Regional News* (Chicago), 13 Apr.: “For her generation, which is commonly defined as those with birth years from the early 1980s to early 2000s, Lindsey Lerner states, ‘NO stands for New Opportunity.’” **2019** *Business World* (New Delhi), 31 Jan.: “Annurag Batra further added, ‘I myself have been trying hard to raise funds and what I’ve learned is that no means new opportunity and rejection

means redirection.” “*NO* means ‘New Opportunity’” probably originated as an anti-proverb responding to “*No* means *no*.”

NUT Up or Shut Up.

2009 *Toronto Star*, 2 Oct.: “‘Nut up or shut up’ is the most quotable of Woody Harrelson’s cowboy maxims in the [2009] genre mash-up *Zombieland*.” **2010** *Gold Coast Bulletin* (Southport QLD), 28 Oct.: “Nut up or shut up, pay your child support and stop crying that you don’t see your kids.” **2015** *Daily Beast* (New York), 2 Apr.: “[P]aul Walker explained . . . that he started participating in disaster-relief shortly after a friend essentially told him to nut up or shut up.” **2025** *University Wire* (Carlsbad NM), 18 Apr.: “Amateur hour is over, and it’s time, as the proverbial saying goes, to nut up or shut up.”

Let the PAST (what happened in the past) stay in the past.

1915 George Frederic Stratton, “Bobby Junior,” *The Bellman* (magazine), 14 Apr.: “My dear Rob: Let the past stay in the past. Come to me at once.” **1936** Chang Tien-Yi, “In Our Time,” *Living Age* (magazine) 351 (Dec.): 292: “And claiming she got her husband through such an idea as that! ‘But I don’t like to talk about it. Let the past stay in the past.’” **1985** *New York Times*, 2 May: “The impulse behind President Reagan’s planned visit to the cemetery . . ., his plea to let the past stay in the past, is not extraordinary . . .” **1985** *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], 11 Sep. (review of a TV series about the mistreatment of Japanese-Canadians During World War II): “Observations such as ‘Let the past stay in the past’ reduce the proceedings to soap opera.”

The PHONE works both ways.

1961 Clayton C. Barbeau, *The Ikon: A Novel* (New York: Coward-McCann), 29: “The phone works both ways. Come up and see me sometime.” **1977** Earl Mac Rauch, *New York, New York* (New York: Simon and Schuster), 222: “The phone works both ways, you know. I’m in the book.” **1985** William Diehl, *Hooligans* (New York: Random House), 167: “‘You just stopped writ-

ing and calling, like you died.’ [¶] ‘The phone works both ways,’ I heard myself say” **2008** *Charleston [WV] Gazette*, 25 Dec.: “I feel terrible that you waited by the phone all day, . . . but for goodness’ sake—the telephone works both ways.”

You are what you **PRETEND** to be.

1961 Kurt Vonnegut, *Mother Night* (Greenwood CT: Fawcett), v: “Introduction. This is the only story of mine whose moral I know . . . : We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.” **1993** *Washington Post*, 31 Oct.: “Plastic hardly pushes back. Therefore it is hardly real. The next step is virtual reality At last, you are what you pretend to be. In a way, you have become a sort of plastic yourself.” **2014** Douglas Haugen, *Tales Told by an Idiot*, “Short Pants” (on-line): “There’s an idea in Existentialism that ‘you are what you pretend to be.’ It stems from the related idea that we are what we do.” **2014** *DailyTelegraph* (London), 21 July: “Since it’s a central truth of modern life that you are what you pretend to be, Ed [Miliband] needs to raise his game in matter of pretense.”

The **PROBLEM** with doing nothing is (not) knowing when you’re finished (when to stop).

1991 Wilt Chamberlain, *A View from Above* (New York: Random House), 57: “The problem with doing nothing is that you never know when you are through. That’s why it’s so easy to keep doing nothing” (Chamberlain refers to the saying as a “Wiltism”). **1997** Nelson DeMille, *Plum Island* (New York: Warner), 1: “I was sitting on my uncle’s back porch, deep in a wicker chair with shallow thoughts running through my mind. It occurred to me that the problem with doing nothing is not knowing when you’re finished.” **1999** *Irish Times* (Dublin), 9 Sep.: “But how do you get six people to agree on anything? . . . [T]hey . . . feel that they’re doing nothing. And the problem is you never know when you’re finished.” **2011** *Asbury Park [NJ] Press*, 1 May: “The problem with doing nothing, the old saying goes, is that you never know when you’re finished.” The saying is sometimes attributed to Benjamin Franklin or Groucho Marx.

Stay (Be) READY so you won't (don't) have to get ready.

2002 *News Tribune* (Tacoma), 17 Oct.: "My dad always told me, 'Stay ready so you don't have to get ready.'" **2007** *Honolulu Advertiser*, 4 Aug.: "But why not practice? Why not be ready so you don't have to get ready?" **2008** *News & Observer* (Raleigh NC), 21 May: "That could change quickly . . . , but as the old saying goes, stay ready so you don't have to get ready." **2018** *Telegraph-Journal* (Saint John N.B.), 21 Jul.: "Stay ready so you won't have to get ready. The generosity, affection and attention you give to others will be returned with interest."

It is not what you SAY but how you say it.

1939 Bruce Robertson, "Writing Called Key to Better Programs," *Broadcasting* 16, no. 12 (5 June), 24: (Quoting radio writer Arch Oboler) "In my plays . . . I have discussed the most controversial subjects without raising the slightest objections . . . On the air, it is not what you say, it's how you say it that matters." **1949** Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (*Collected Plays*, 1944-1961. New York: Library of America, 2006) 201 (Willy addresses Biff): "Don't look worried. Start off with a couple of your good stories to lighten things up. It's not what you say, it's how you say it—because personality always wins the day." **1986** *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 Mar.: "'Dr. Ruth [Siegel] is more graphic than I am,' she [Carol Coda] says. 'It's not what you say, it's how you say it.'" **1988** *New York Times*, 6 Jul.: "In black culture, it's not what you say, it's how you say it, Dr. [Janice] Hale-Benson said. We value charismatic and stylistic use of language rather than fluency and vocabulary breadth."

SAY it, don't spray it.

1977 Eric Partridge, *Dictionary of Catch Phrases* (Briarcliff Manor NY: Stein and Day), 186: "Say it, don't spray it," glossed as "Don't spit while you're talking: Aus[tralian]: since the late 1940s." **1988** Louise Bates Ames, Frances L. Ilg, and Sidney M. Baker, *Your Ten- to Fourteen-Year-Old* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell), 47: "An eleven-year-old can actually be

mildly amusing, especially when insulting classmates: ‘Say it, don’t spray it.’” **2000** Song from a made-for-TV movie *2gether* (Keystone/MTV): “Girl you got to say it, don’t spray it. / I want the news, not the weather.” **2020** *Sunday Independent* (Johannesburg), 26 Apr. (headline): “Spray it, don’t say it: Kenya graffiti artists spread health message.” (In this anti-proverb the word *spray* is perhaps a pun: a graffiti message is *sprayed*—that is, spray-painted—onto a surface, and the messages often advise the wearing of masks to prevent the exhaling—the spraying—of Covid virus by sneezing or coughing or even *saying*.)

If you SEE it high, let it fly; if you see it low, let it go.

1993 *Philadelphia Daily News*, 26 Apr.: “Hitting a pitch is tough, like trying to catch a butterfly, [Pete] Incaviglia said. But it’s like (knuckleballer) Charlie Hough always told me. If it’s high, let it fly. If it’s low, let it go” (parenthesis as shown). **2005** *Daily Herald* (Arlington Park IL), 13 June: “The general rule of thumb . . . is if it’s high let it fly, if it’s low you’ve got to let it go. . . . [Tim] Wakefield agreed that keeping the ball down was crucial to his performance.” **2016** *Gulf Times* (Qatar), 6 Aug.: “I think you have to take an old-school approach, [Dave] Roberts said. ‘If you see it high, let it fly.’ The other half of the adage is ‘if it’s low, let it go,’ but it didn’t really matter that Roberts omitted it.” **2024** *Denver Post*, 21 Apr.: “. . . [O]ur motto all week was ‘If it’s low, let it go, and if it’s high, let it fly.’ And that’s what we did. We waited for the pitches up in the zone.” (The baseball adage, in a literal sense, offers advice to a batter endeavoring to hit a knuckleball pitched to him.)

You can judge someone by the SHINE of his shoes.

1913 “Rubber Goods,” *Chicago Commerce* 9, no. 25 (24 Oct.) 41: “It is said that . . . you can tell a Chicago man by the shine of his shoes.” **1987** Jane Rule, *Memory Board* (Tallahassee FL: Naiad) 93: “Well, your mother thought she could spot an embezzler by the color of his tie and a lecher by the shine of his shoes. I hate to admit to you how often she was right.” **2010** Mary E. DeMuth, *Life in Defiance* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan.com):

“Mama always said you could tell the value of a man by the shine of his shoes.” **2014** Harlan Coben, *Missing You* (New York: Dutton), 52: “Chaz wore . . . Ferragano shoes that brought to mind the old adage about judging a man by the shine of his shoes. The adage was crap.”

Don’t squat with (your) SPURS on.

1992 Bix Bender, *Don’t Squat with Your Spurs on: A Cowboy’s Guide to Life* (Layton UT: Gibbs Smith). **2003** *Ottawa Citizen*, 13 June: “To the high school graduating classes of 2003: . . . I’ve put together a list of old sayings, maxims and proverbs . . . So, always remember: . . . ‘Never squat with your spurs on.’” **2006** *Post and Courier* (Charleston SC), 11 Nov.: “. . . [T]hose interested in taking up cowboy action shooting are offered some sage advice: Don’t burn daylight, keep your powder dry and never squat with spurs on.” **2007** *Lakes District News* (Burns Lake BC), 14 Mar.: “An old cowboy saying: Don’t squat with your spurs on as you might leave tacks on parts of your anatomy that you can’t show to anybody”

You don’t have to see the whole STAIRCASE to take the first step.

2002 *Boston Globe*, 28 July: “. . . [S]tudents . . . can’t help but glance at the name card in front of them and the words on the back of each: ‘Take the first step in faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just to take the first step.’” **2003** *Record* (Sherbrooke, QC) 23 May: “Take the first step of faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.” **2015** *Weekend Australian* (Canberra), May 2: “Martin Luther King Jr. once said that we don’t have to see the entire staircase, all that we need to do to progress is to take the first step.” **2023** Joel Puthoff, *Capability Fuel* (Charlotte NC: Fortune 5 Consulting), 105: “So, don’t assume you have to see the entire staircase to take the first step.”

Don’t STOP when you’re tired, stop when you’re done (through).

2012 *Public Opinion* (Chambersburg PA), 17 Nov.: “This is where mothering is like running. Keep your eye on the finish

line. Don't stop when you're tired, stop when you're done." **2018** *Lansing [MI] State Journal*, 13 May: "Favorite quote [of a high-school student]: 'Don't stop when you're tired; stop when you're done.'" **2019** *The Guardian* (London), 29 Jan.: "They drink from water coolers containing floating cucumbers carved with pro-work slogans, such as 'Don't stop when you're tired, stop when you're done.'" **2024** *Straits Times* (Singapore), 23 June: "She can't stop because there's a saying she heard once which she holds close like a sporting prayer. 'Don't stop when you're tired. Stop when you're finished.'"

Think (Visualize) SUCCESS and you will succeed.

1904 "Think Just a Minute," *Underwriters Review* 13, no. 3 (Feb.), 55: "Keep to the Broad highway of Hope and Cheerfulness. Expect to succeed. Think success and you will succeed." **1984** Morten Lund, "Mind over Matter," *Ski* 49 (Nov.), 186: "Think failure and you fail. Think success and you succeed. Visualization is that powerful." **2006** Ed Horrell, *The Kindness Revolution* (New York: Amacom), 111: "Think success, and you will succeed. Think of the reasons why you will fail, and you will fail." **2014** Nelson DeMille, *Night Fall* (New York: Warner), 183: "I flashed forward to a scene where I actually broke this case open—visualize success as they say, and you will succeed."

Have no SYMPATHY for the devil.

1971 Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (New York: Random House), 89: "This is the moment of truth, that fine and fateful line between control and disaster . . . No sympathy for the devil; keep that in mind . . ." **1990** *Newsweek* 115, no. 1 (1 Jan.), 19: "No Sympathy for the Devil," title of an article about Manuel Noriega. **1990** *Time* (magazine) 135, no. 12 (19 Mar.), 55: "No Sympathy for the Devil," title of an article about John Cardinal O'Connor's attack on heavy-metal music. **1998** *Hartford Courant*, 23 Oct.: "Bianca Jagger's message at Trinity College . . . as she talked about Yugoslavia, was that the family of nations must have no sympathy for the devil."

You are what you THINK.

1982 *New York Times*, 10 Oct.: “Following my own principle that you are what you think, I conclude that at this stage of life I am pure confusion.” **2013** *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 14 Feb.: “I am a big proponent of this philosophy [i.e. ‘You are what you eat’], and an even bigger one of another saying: You are what you think.” **2014** *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), 6 June: “We have all heard the adage ‘You are what you think.’ But that opens a real can of worms.” **2022** Carlton N. Young, *Achieving What You Want* (Pittsburgh: Dorance), xxii: “Understand this—you are what you think! Think of failure, and you will fail; think success, and you WILL SUCCEED!” (capitalization as shown). The saying, with the clause “So think big” appended, is sometimes attributed to Andrew Carnegie.

You buy (bought) the TICKET, you take the ride.

1971 Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (New York: Random House), 89: “Buy the ticket, take the ride . . . and if it occasionally gets a little heavier than what you had in mind, well . . . chalk it up to forced *consciousness expansion*” (ellipsis dots and italics as shown). **1989** *Sun Sentinel* (Fort Lauderdale), 18 July: “[Michael] Pasano prosecuted several lawyers drawn into dirty deeds. He harbored little sympathy for the tainted attorneys. ‘You buy the ticket, you take the ride,’ Pasano said.” **2001** Margaret Mosely, *Milicent Leseur* (Dallas: Three Forks) 136: “I decided to follow another piece of Ethel’s advice, ‘You bought the ticket, you take the ride.’” **2011** *Battle Creek [MI] Enquirer*, 30 Jan.: “. . . ‘[T]here’s no way out,’ John Kaski said before comparing it to being in line—with no escape—for a thrill ride at a theme park. ‘You bought the ticket. Take the ride.’” In 2006 a documentary film about Hunter S. Thompson (starring Nick Nolte, Bill Murray, Johnny Depp, and Gary Bussey) appeared with title *Buy the Ticket, Take the Ride*.

TRASH takes itself out.

2019 *Ahmedabad [India] Mirror*, 26 Jan.: “The festival of literature and books sadly is not having a great run this year . . . [A] lot

of prominent men are missing . . . The Insider handle writes about it as ‘sometimes the trash takes itself out.’” **2023** *News Journal* (Wilmington DE), 2 July: [spoken by a gay man after an altercation with other bar patrons] “I feel really proud of our friends, family, and community . . . You like to see when trash takes itself out.” **2023** *Toronto Sun*, 6 Dec.: [quoting Taylor Swift] “But I’ve also learned there’s no point in actively trying to quote-unquote defeat your enemies. Trash takes itself out every single time.” **2023** *Mail on Sunday* (London), 17 Dec. “And while [Kanye] West’s star has faded, hers [Taylor Swift’s] continues to shine like a diamond. ‘Trash takes itself out every time,’ is how she puts it.”

Don’t trouble TROUBLE till trouble troubles you.

1903 “The Older and Better Music Hall,” *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art* 96, no. 2507 (11 Nov.), 611: “As of yore, he [Harry Freeman] is overwhelmed with misfortune. Fate smites him hip and thigh. He has just been robbed by one man and knocked down by another. His home has been broken up. He has recently been in prison. But / ‘If you don’t trouble trouble, / Trouble doesn’t trouble *you*’, and no sympathy is craved by this joyous dancer” (italics as shown; the proverb itself is set as verse). **1913** Herford Lennox Gordon, *Laconics*, “24 edition” (Los Angeles, self-published), 300: “Don’t trouble trouble till trouble troubles you. No man gets into trouble without his own help. **1989** *Gazette* (Montreal), 10 Sep.: “Doctors have varying opinions about the timing of [prostate] surgery . . . Other surgeons advise waiting until the symptoms are causing a significant amount of annoyance. They follow the Arabic dictum, ‘Never trouble trouble until trouble troubles you.’” **2022** *Observer* (Kampala, Uganda), 14 Aug.: “My mother often said, ‘Don’t trouble trouble, until trouble troubles you,’ and Kenneth was trouble with a capital T.”

Every WAR is a war against children. (All wars are wars against children.)

2001 *M2 Presswire* (Coventry UK), 11 July: “At the UN conference on small arms, UNICEF reminded delegates that children and young people are the principal victims . . . ‘All wars are wars against children,’ UNICEF said, urging strong measures

to curtail illicit arms trading.” **2002** Howard Zinn, “Our Job Is a Simple One: Stop Them,” *Progressive* (magazine) 66, no. 12 (Dec), 17: “. . . [W]ars are always wars against children. In every war unforgivable numbers of children die.” **2022** Patrick B. Reyes, “Advent of the Ministry of the Future,” *Presbyterian Outlook* 204, no. 16 (14 Nov.), 13: “Future generations are being marked for death. Every war is a war on children, and we have found new forms of warfare.” **2023** Ayesha Kadir and Vinay Kampalath, “Children Pay the Price for Our Silence, Again,” *The Lancet* 402, no. 10414 (30 Oct.), 1745: “As humanitarians, we know that every war is a war on children. The destructive legacy of war . . . does not consider sides or intentions.”

The only (best) way to fight an idea is with a better idea.

1926 “A Quarantine Against Ideas” (editorial), *Christian Century* 43, no. 52 (30 Dec.), 1623: “False and dangerous social and economic doctrines . . . are not disease germs to be combatted by antiseptics They are ideas, and the only way to fight an idea is with a better idea.” **1949** “Communism in the United States,” *Armed Forces Talk* 301 (Washington DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense), 9: “The best way to fight any idea is with a better idea. The most effective defense against communism in the United States is the constant development of a strong, working democracy.” **2002** *Jerusalem Post*, 16 May: “. . . [W]ell educated people are less easily fooled by dictators and demagogues. The only way to fight an idea is with a better idea.” **2014** *Daily Telegraph* (London), 23 Aug.: “You cannot lock up an idea in Belmarsh or turn it back at Heathrow. The only way to defeat a bad idea is with a better idea.”

If there is no WIND, row.

1938 Selwyn Gurney Champion, *Racial Proverbs* (New York: Macmillan), 247 (in a section listing Polish proverbs): “If there is no wind, row.” **1964** *Reader’s Digest* 84, no. 3 (March), 47 (filler item): “If there is no wind, row.—Polish proverb.” **1989** *St. Petersburg [Florida] Times*, 23 Aug. (letter-to-the-editor): “I am equally confident that the Polish people, facing great obstacles, will overcome and prevail by adhering steadfastly to their own

proverb, ‘If there is no wind, row.’” **2012** *Korea Times (Seoul)*, 22 June: “. . . [T]he breakout nations of the new era will take their mantra from a Latin proverb “If there is no wind, row.” Not infrequently, in context, the English expression is identified as a Polish proverb though sometimes as a Roman (or “Latin”) proverb.

WOMEN: You can’t live with them and can’t live without them.

1919 “In the Experience Exchange,” *The Editor* 51, no. 1 (10 July), xii: Damn the women! You can’t live with ’em and you can’t live without ’em.” **1928** Eugene O’Neill, *Strange Interlude* (New York: Boni & Liveright) 94: “All I meant was that Ghosts remind me of men’s smart crack about women, you can’t live with them and can’t live without them.” **1989** *The Province* (Vancouver), 26 Mar.: “A woman assaulted and threatened at gunpoint . . . will file a complaint . . . for the judge’s comment in sentencing: ‘Somebody once said to me: “Women—you can’t live with them; you can’t live without them.”’” **2021** *Orlando [FL] Sentinel*, 6 Mar.: “The adage goes something like this: ‘Women: You can’t live with them, you can’t live without them.’ Though that statement has its merits, I actually feel a better phrase would be; ‘Women: you can’t live with them, and they can’t live with each other.’”

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