



MI GRANNY SEH!

A collection of Jamaican Proverbs



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PREFACE

Through the hybridization of the Jamaican culture, the island boasts a plethora of cultural practices and traditions taken from the many cultural groups within the island. One such element of this culture is the usage of proverbs to express one self. The meanings sometimes not literal, but is used to convey a message in a very colourful way. This element of our culture has been retained from our forefathers who were brought from Africa to work on sugarcane plantations. These proverbs became popular as they served as codes between slaves who wanted to convey messages in a form that their masters did not understand.

I hope you learn how to use these in everyday conversations to express hidden meanings.

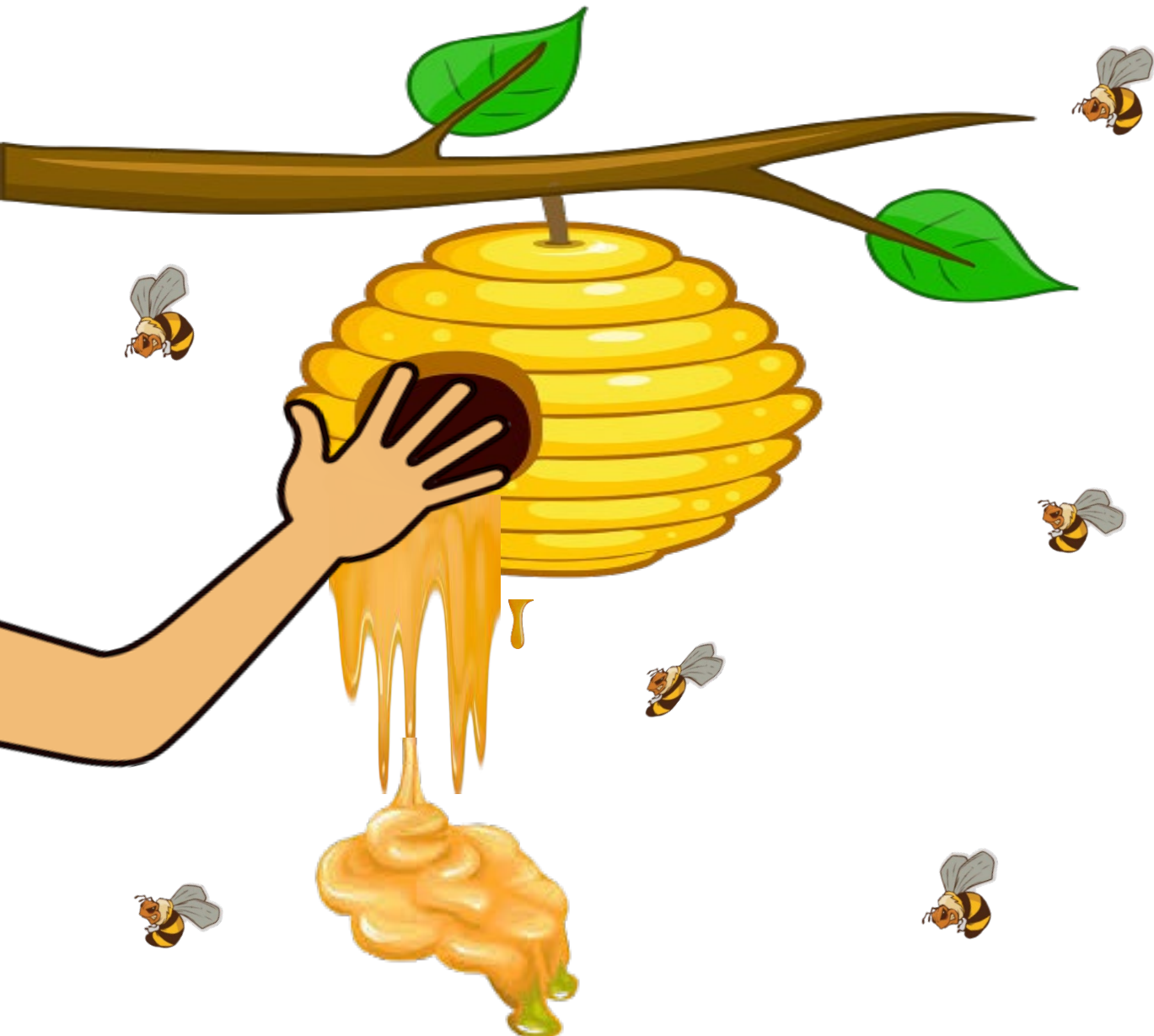
“Finger neber seh look here, him seh look yonder.”



Translation: Finger never says look here, he says look yonder.

Explanation: People are usually quick to point out the faults of others but do not take into consideration their own shortcomings.

“If yuh get yuh han’ in a debil mout’ tek time tek it out.”



Translation: If you get your hand in the devil’s mouth, carefully remove it.

Explanation: When you find yourself in difficulty act cautiously to remedy the situation.

“Nuh wait til drum beat before you grine you axe.”



Translation: Do not wait until the drum beats before you grind your axe.

Explanation; It is always in your best interest to be thoroughly prepared for all eventualities, especially those that jeopardize your safety and wellbeing.

“Ebry day debil help teef, wan dayh Gad wi help watchman”.



Translation: Every day the devil help thief; one-day God will help the watchman.

Explanation: While it may appear that unscrupulous forces continuously disadvantage persons who make a living by the sweat of their brow, we should not despair. Our God, omnipotent in all his might will one day punish the wicked and reward those who follow his will faithfully.



“Cowad man kip soun’ bone.”

Translation: A cowardly man keeps sound bones.

Explanations: Acts of cowardice are sometimes necessary as it keeps us from jeopardizing our lives in dangerous situations. It is therefore better to pre-emptively save yourself from destruction than to give away one’s life through impetuous behaviour.

“If yuh noh mash ants, yuh noh fine him guts.”



Translation: If you do not smash an ant, it is impossible for you to find its guts.

Explanation: In order for us to know the true capabilities of a person, we must first become their adversary, provoking them to their limits to understand the extent of their fury.

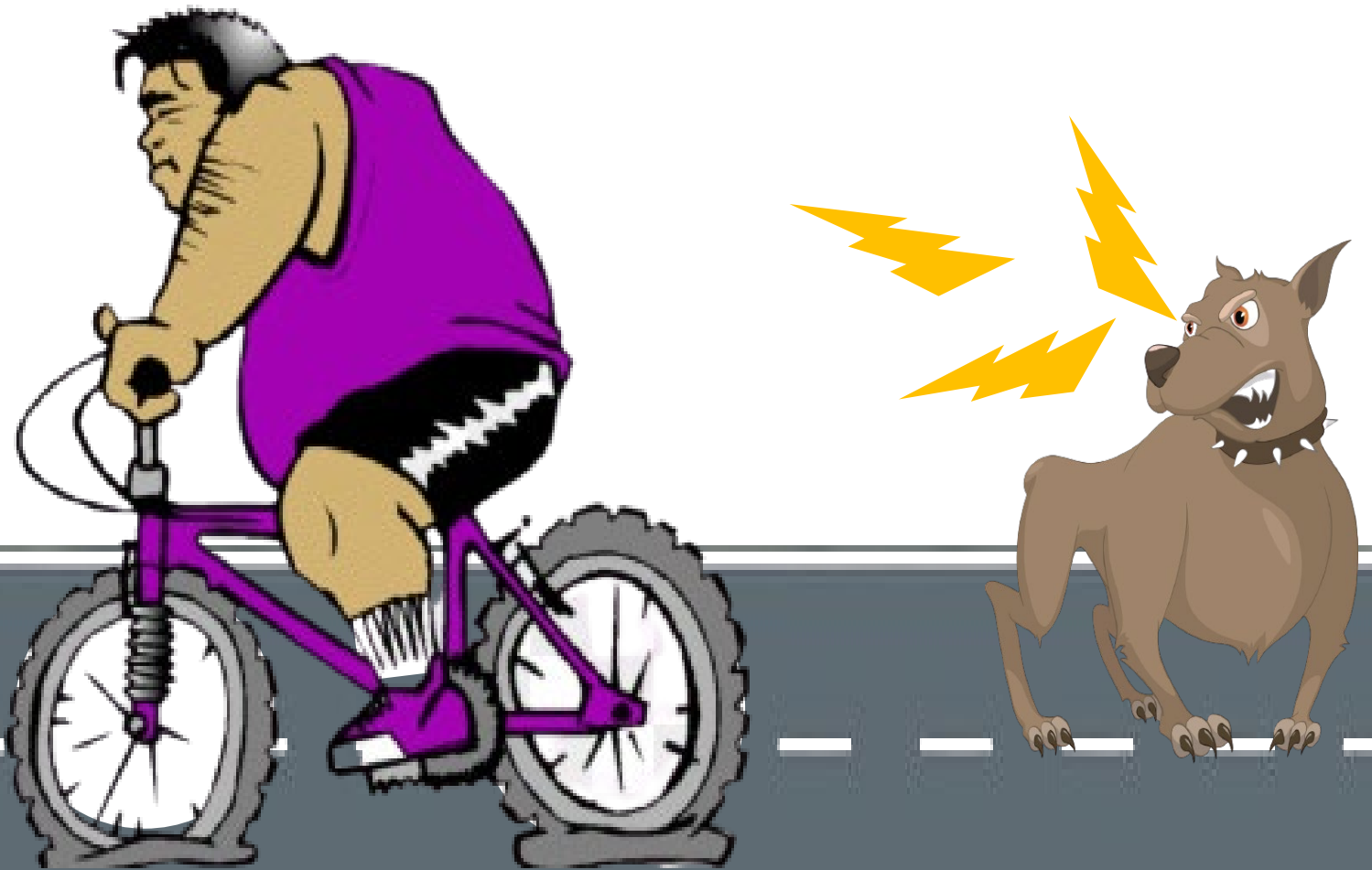
“Yuh shake man hand, but you noh shake him hawt.”



Translation: You can shake a man's hand, but you cannot shake his heart.

Explanation: Although on the exterior a person may appear amicable and his actions may prove he is just, his heart can be corrupted and poisoned against you. It is therefore impossible to detect a person's true intentions towards you through mere physical contact.

“When trubble tek yu, pikney shut fit yuh.”



Translation: when you find yourself in trouble, a child's shirt fits you.

Explanation: Oftentimes when we find ourselves in trouble we use any means necessary to escape I, no matter how juvenile and foolish they may seem.

“Big blanket mek man sleep late.”



Translation: A thick blanket causes a man to sleep late.

Explanation: Those with an overabundance of luxuries often become complacent, neglecting to take into consideration the hardships that other people endure and take their life's blessings for granted.

“Wah sweet a mout hat a belly.”



Translation: What tastes sweet in the mouth burns the belly.

Explanation: The things that provide us with great entertainment and value can sometimes be the same things that can cause us great discomfort if done in abundance.

“Want all, lose all.”



Translation: If you want everything you see, you will eventually lose all you have.

Explanation: Take just what you can comfortably manage rather than attempt to grab everything for yourself, lest you destroy all in the process.

“Willful waste bring woeful want.”



Translation: Willful waste brings woeful wants.

Explanation: We should try not to wilfully waste what we have or we could end up bitterly regretting what we wasted when we find ourselves in great need.

“Lang run, shawt ketch.”



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Translation: long run, short catch

Explanation: it may take a long while for you to be caught and punished for wrong doing, but you will be caught one day.

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