

IS THAT SO? WOULD YOU BELIEVE?

JAN ACKERSON

Three Oaks, Michigan

In the 1960s, my father's hobby was inventing games. Although none of his games was ever accepted by a major publishing company, a few were printed locally and sold for a short time in the central Michigan area. One of his games, unfortunately named Izzat So by the publishers (another edition was called Wud-U-Blev), was my particular favorite. In Izzat So, players reassembled proverbs which had been printed on small cardboard tiles and divided into three pieces.

Incredibly, my future husband's parents bought a copy of the game, and this copy I proudly presented to my own daughters recently, explaining how Grandpa and Mommy had spent hours play-testing and developing this wonderful game. It was while I was teaching my oldest daughter, Megan, to play Izzat So that I rediscovered what had given me the most joy 25 years ago. What fun it was to rearrange the tiles and form new proverbs--maxims with a ring of, well, not-quite-truth, such as Beauty is but skin deep, and Beauty is the best cook.

Even my six-year-old, Jericho, enjoys this variation of the game; for example, she coined the saying Don't bite before spilled milk.

Following are some of my favorite neo-adages. I formed them in several ways: in Group A, the initial tiles were switched; in Group B, the middle tiles; in Group C, the final tiles; and in Group D, I just fiddled around until I came up with something appealing, often combining more than three tiles. Part of the charm, of course, is imagining a context in which these "new saws" might be spoken, with appropriate grandmotherly wisdom.

Group A Don't bite a pig in a poke
 Every dog has the disease
 Misery begins at home
 Don't cry in a storm
 Time is but skin deep
 Beggars teach an old dog new tricks

Group B The early hands make the worm
 One rotten bird gets the barrel
 Curiosity knocks the cat
 Rome was sleeping in a day
 A bad broom comes back
 Pride loves to hear a fall

Group C The early bird gets big ears

Beggars can't be in one basket
 What goes up must grind slowly
 One rotten apple spoils the worm
 Every mule loves to hear fertilizer
 Don't put all our eggs in the mouth

Group D All your eggs are a devil's broom
 A fool and a pig grind slowly
 Pitchers have no moss in the mouth
 No fool goeth before the wheels
 Never buy pot while the mice will play
 Little of the pudding killed the worm
 A gift horse glitters like an apple spoils
 If the best cook can't be at home, there is smoke
 Sleeping together in one basket heals all
 Big ears don't look in a workshop

For those of you who are unable to recognize all of the proverbs by their components, the entire list of Izzat So proverbs is given below. I hope some other **Word Ways** readers are fortunate enough to own a copy of Bob Worgul's game. If you do not, perhaps you'll enjoy creating your own neo-adages. I'd like to hear about your favorites; write me at 808 North Cherry St., Three Oaks MI 49128.

Hunger is the best cook	Don't bite the hand that feeds you
Beauty is but skin deep	The cure is worse than the disease
Look before you leap	One rotten apple spoils the barrel
Don't cry over spilled milk	Every mule loves to hear himself bray
Never buy a pig in a poke	The wheels of justice grind slowly
Every dog has his day	Snow is the poor man's fertilizer
Misery loves company	Don't look a gift horse in the mouth
Charity begins at home	Idle hands are a devil's workshop
Any port in a storm	A fool and his money are soon parted
Time heals all wounds	A rolling stone gathers no moss
Beggars can't be choosers	Make hay while the sun shines
The early bird gets the worm	When the cat's away the mice will play
Many hands make light work	The proof of the pudding is in the eating
Curiosity killed the cat	All that glitters is not gold
Rome was not built in a day	Where there is smoke there is fire
Let sleeping dogs lie	Birds of a feather flock together
A bad penny always comes back	The pen is mightier than the sword
A new broom sweeps clean	You can't tell a book by its cover
Pride goeth before a fall	A penny saved is a penny earned
Opportunity knocks but once	You can't teach an old dog new tricks
Little pitchers have big ears	Time and tide wait for no man
Honesty is the best policy	A great ship asks deep waters
What goes up must come down	Those who play with fire get burned
No fool like an old fool	Strike while the iron is hot
A watched pot never boils	Too many cooks spoil the broth
If the shoe fits wear it	Variety is the spice of life
Still waters run deep	An apple a day keeps the doctor away
A stitch in time saves nine	There is small choice in rotten apples
A calm portends a storm	Don't put all your eggs in one basket