The Foolish Duckling
by Margot Mohan

There once was a foolish young gander who, since the first moments of his life, lived only for pleasure. His mother was greatly distressed by this and continuously tried to employ him in some useful occupation. But it was of no use, for this goose would have his way and ignored his mother's admonitions.

Every day his brothers and sisters would follow his mother to the pond, where she would teach them how to swim, and every day he would say, "There's no rush, I can learn how to swim any time, and anyways, I would much rather be doing…" Always it was the same: if there was something he'd rather do—and there always was—he'd put off swimming. Soon it was late July, and his mother began teaching the young goslings how to fly. Again the young gander looked down on his diligent siblings thinking, "What fools! Don't they know they can learn how to fly whenever they please? They are simply wasting time better spent enjoying oneself."

After two months of flying lessons, the young geese were quite proficient and already the air was beginning to grow cold. When the gander felt the cold, he decided that perhaps he should begin to learn how to swim and fly. Now only one week before migration, this young bird began to hurriedly attempt to fly, barely eating or sleeping in his desperation to gain this invaluable skill. But it was of no use; try as he might, he could not stay aloft above ten minutes. He always lost his balance and fell clumsily from the sky. His brothers and sisters, on the other hand, had been slowly perfecting the art of flying with ease and endurance. Finally the day for migrating dawned. The pond rustled with excitement as the geese made their last-minute preparations for the long journey ahead. When they finally took off, the foolish young gander was with them, lagging behind the group, struggling to keep up with the rest.

The flock of geese flew on for days until they finally reached their winter abode. When they alighted, the leader of the flock conducted a census of all the geese to see that they were all accounted for. All of them were present, except for one. The foolish gander had dropped out of the sky from exhaustion somewhere along the way.

Do not put off till tomorrow that which can be done today.