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THE LAST GOLD EGG IN THE WORLD

Translated by Bruce Walter

Inside an old tale... there was another old story which told of some strange ducks.

They lived on a lake called Macadua. They had one green eye and the other a pale blue, and on their throat, below their beak they had a patch of deep, deep red. The strangest thing about them, though, was that they laid gold eggs. It was this that made them different from every other duck the whole world over. However, they weren't at all pleased they were different. For as *The Little Book of Great Wise Truths* will tell you, "though being different can be good at times, more often than not it's better not to stand out from the others".

And it really would have been better if those strange ducks had been the same as all the others, for all those gold eggs brought them was misfortune. Each one of them would lay a single huge egg made of solid gold and as soon as she had done so she would have to die.

But they would neither have laid gold eggs or been obliged to die if it hadn't been for men. It was they who were to blame for all of their misfortunes. For these strange ducks had lived for years and years with a closely-guarded secret, and that secret was the red patch on their throat. If ever it was touched by human hand, the duck would be obliged to bring a gold egg into the light of day without delay and breathe her last in doing so. Now when it comes to gold, men sooner or later find the key to secrets such as that. But how they learned this one, when, and who they learned it from was something no one knows.

Kings, rulers, princes and great generals -all those, that is, with wealth and thrones and medals but brains the size of peas- competed jealously to get the most ducks in their hands. Their eyes grew savage in the wild chase, but worse than that their minds and souls grew savage too. For as *The Little Book of Great Wise Truths* will tell you, "another's misfortune will never bring you happiness".

On account of those gold eggs, quarrels and fights broke out which soon turned into wars. And endless war brought on -what else?- but more war still. No one had any time to enjoy the gold, since the eggs were used to pay for swords and cannons in the never-ending wars which were forever breaking out because of them.

So what with war on war, those strange ducks died off one by one until there came a time when men forgot the miseries and evils they had brought upon themselves through their own foolishness. And since in the years that followed no one could find lake