

# The Little Prince



I believe he escaped by hitching a ride with a flock of migrating wild birds.

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

# The Little Prince

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# The Little Prince



*To Léon Werth.*

I hope children will forgive me if I dedicate this book to a grown-up. I have a serious excuse: this grown-up is the best friend I have in the world. I have another excuse: this grown-up understands everything, even books for children. I have a third excuse: this grown-up lives in France, where he is cold and hungry. He really needs consoling. If all these excuses aren't enough, I'm happy to dedicate this book to the child whom this grown-up used to be. All grown-ups started out as children. (But few of them remember it.) So I correct my dedication:

*To Léon Werth  
when he was a little boy.*







## I

Once, when I was six years old, I saw a marvellous picture in a book on rainforests called *Real-Life Stories*. It depicted a boa constrictor swallowing a wild animal. Here is a replica of the picture.

In the book it said: “Boa constrictors swallow their prey whole, without chewing. Afterwards they cannot move, and sleep for six months digesting.”

I thought a great deal about goings-on in the jungle and, in turn, with a crayon, managed to produce my first drawing. My drawing number 1. It was like this:



I showed my masterpiece to the grown-ups and asked them if my drawing frightened them.

They answered: “What’s frightening about a hat?”

My drawing was not of a hat. It showed a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. I then drew the insides of the boa constrictor, so that the grown-ups could understand. They’re always looking for explanations. My drawing number 2 was like this:



The grown-ups advised me to set drawings of open or closed boa constrictors aside, and to concentrate instead on geography, history, mathematics and grammar. So it was, at the age of six, that I abandoned a magnificent career as a painter. I’d been discouraged by the failure of my drawing number 1 and my drawing number 2. Grown-ups never understand anything on their own, and it’s tiring, for children, to be for ever and ever explaining...

Having to choose another profession, I learnt to fly planes. I flew a little all over the world. And it’s true that geography served me well. At a glance I could distinguish China from Arizona. That’s very useful, if you get lost in the night.

And so, in the course of my life, I’ve had lots of encounters with lots of serious people. I have lived a great deal among grown-ups. I have seen them up close. It hasn’t done much to improve my opinion.

Whenever I met one who seemed faintly perceptive, I subjected them to the experiment with my drawing number 1, which I've always kept. I wanted to know if they could really understand. But they always answered: "It's a hat." So I would tell them nothing about boa constrictors, or rainforests, or the stars. I put myself at their level. I spoke to them about bridge, golf, politics and neckties. And the grown-up was very pleased to know such a reasonable man...

## II

And so I lived alone, with no one really to talk to, until a breakdown in the Saharan desert, six years ago. Something had failed in my engine. As I had neither passengers nor a mechanic, I was getting ready to attempt, all on my own, some difficult repairs. It was a matter of life or death. I had scarcely enough drinking water to last eight days.

That first night I went to sleep on the sand a thousand miles from any human dwelling. I was much more alone than a person shipwrecked on a raft in the middle of the ocean. So you can imagine my surprise when, at sunrise, a strange little voice woke me. It said:

"Please... draw me a sheep!"

"Huh!"

"Draw me a sheep..."

I leapt to my feet as if struck by lightning. I rubbed my eyes thoroughly. I had a good look. And I saw an altogether

extraordinary little fellow who was watching me with a solemn expression. Here is the best portrait that I was able to make of him, later on. But, of course, my drawing is much less beautiful than the model. It's not my fault. Grown-ups had discouraged me from my artistic career when I was six, and I hadn't learnt to draw anything other than open or closed boa constrictors.

So I was watching this apparition with wide, astonished eyes. Don't forget that I was a thousand miles from any human dwelling. Yet my little fellow looked neither lost, nor dying of weariness, dying of hunger, dying of thirst or dying of fear. He seemed nothing like a child lost in the middle of the desert, a thousand miles from any human dwelling. When at last I managed to speak, I asked him:

“But... what are you doing out here?”

And he said again, very softly, in all seriousness:

“Please... draw me a sheep...”

When a mystery is too overwhelming, you dare not disobey. As absurd as it seemed to me a thousand miles from any human dwelling and in mortal danger, I reached into my pocket for a piece of paper and a pen. Then I remembered that I had studied mostly geography, history, mathematics and grammar, and I said to the little fellow (in something of a bad mood) that I didn't know how to draw. He replied:

“It doesn't matter. Draw me a sheep.”

As I had never drawn a sheep, I redid, for his benefit, one of the only two drawings I was capable of. That of the closed boa constrictor. And I was astounded to hear the little man reply:



Here is the best portrait that I was able to make of him, later on.



“No! No! I don’t want an elephant inside a boa constrictor. A boa constrictor is dangerous, and an elephant is very bulky. My home’s very small. I need a sheep. Draw me a sheep.”

So I drew.

He looked carefully, then said:

“No! That one’s already very ill. Do another.”

I drew:

My friend smiled kindly, indulgently:

“See for yourself... that’s not a sheep, it’s a ram. It’s got horns...”

So I redid my drawing again:

But it was rejected, like the previous ones:

“That one’s too old. I want a sheep that will live a long time.”

Finally, my patience at an end, as I was in a hurry to start dismantling my engine, I scribbled this drawing:

And I exclaimed:

“That’s the crate. The sheep you want is inside.”

But I was very surprised to see my young critic’s face light up:

“That’s exactly how I wanted it! Do you think this sheep needs a lot of grass?”

“Why?”

“Because my place is very small...”



“I’m sure it’ll be enough. I’ve given you a very small sheep.”  
He bent his head over the drawing:  
“Not that small... Look! It’s fallen asleep...”  
And so it was that I made the acquaintance of the little prince.

### III

It took me a long time to understand where he came from. The little prince, who asked me lots of questions, seemed never to hear my own. Little by little, things he said at random revealed everything to me. When, for instance, he saw my plane for the first time (I won’t attempt my plane, it’s far too complex a drawing) he asked me:

“What’s that thing?”

“It’s not a thing. It flies. It’s a plane.  
It’s my plane.”

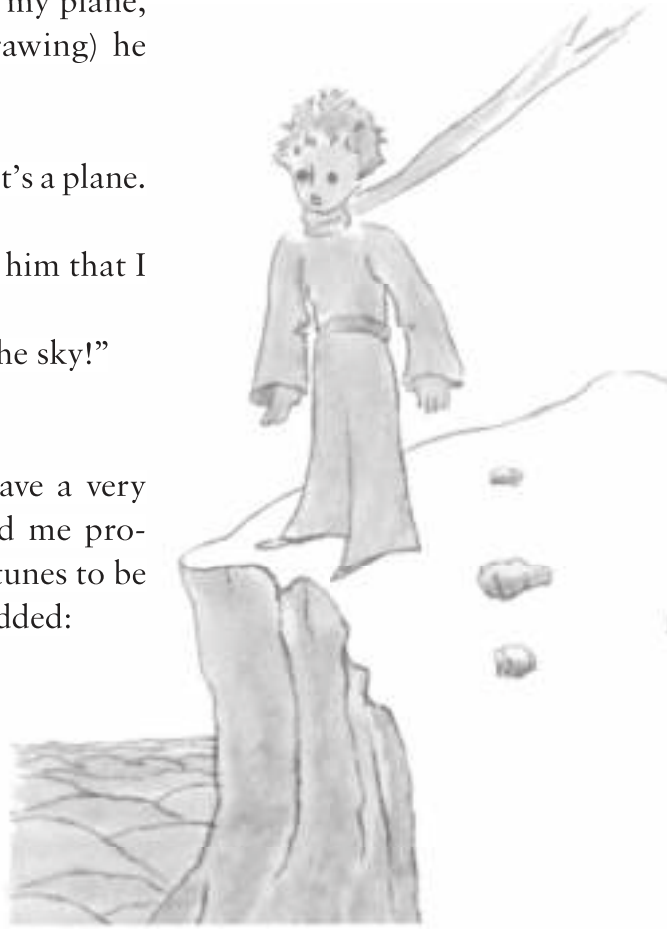
And I was proud to tell him that I flew. Then he cried out:

“Really! You fell from the sky!”

“Yes,” I said modestly.

“Ah! That’s funny!...”

And the little prince gave a very pretty laugh that irritated me profoundly. I want my misfortunes to be taken seriously. Then he added:



“So, you also come from the sky! Which planet are you from?”

I saw at once a glimmer of light in the mystery of his presence, and asked bluntly:

“Why, do you come from another planet?”

But he didn’t answer. He nodded his head gently while considering my plane:

“It’s true that you can’t have come from far, on that...”

And he sank into a daydream that lasted a long time. Finally, taking my sheep out of his pocket, he buried himself in contemplation of his treasure.

You can imagine how intrigued I was by this partial revelation about these “other planets”. I tried to find out more:

“Where do you come from, my little man? Where is ‘home’ for you? Where do you want to take my sheep?”

He answered after a thoughtful silence:

“The good thing about the crate you’ve given me is that it can be its house at night.”

“Of course. And if you’re good, I’ll also give you a rope to tie it up with during the day. And a post.”

The suggestion appeared to shock the little prince.

“Tie it up? What a strange idea!”

“If you don’t tie it up, it will wander off and get lost.”

Again my friend laughed out loud:

“Where do you expect it to go?”

“Anywhere. Straight ahead...”

Then the little prince replied gravely:





The Little Prince on Asteroid B 612