

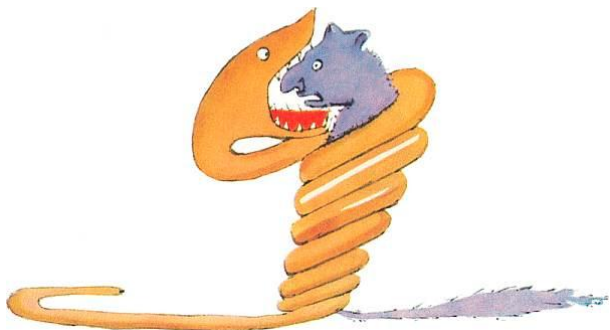
Antoine de Saint-Exupery

The Little Prince

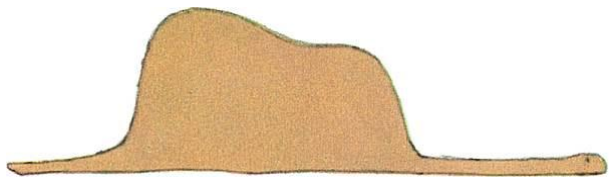


Chapter I

When I was six years old I saw a picture that had a great impact on me. It was in a book called *The real nature stories* where an ancient forest was described. There was a picture of a boa constrictor that was swallowing an animal. This is how it looked:



It said: “Boa constrictors swallow their catch without chewing. After that, they cannot move and will sleep for up to six months, which they need to digest the food.” Back then I was fascinated by jungle adventures. It didn’t take me long to draw my first picture. My picture number one looked like this:



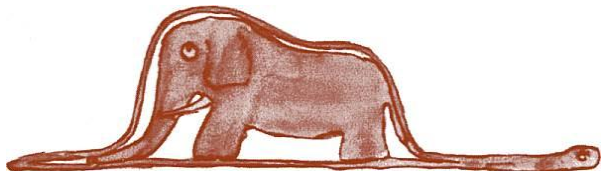
I showed my masterpiece to adults and asked whether they were scared.

“Are we scared? Who is afraid of a hat?” they answered.

But I didn’t draw the hat. It was the boa

constrictor digesting an elephant. But because the adults couldn't understand this I made another picture: I showed what was inside the boa constrictor so the adults were able to see it clearly. They always need everything explaining.

My picture number two looked like this:



This time the adults advised me to leave the pictures of the boa constrictor, inside or outside, and dedicate myself to Geography, Arithmetic and Grammar. So, at the age of six, I gave up the thing that could bring me a successful career as an artist. I lost inspiration because of the failures with both my pictures. Adults will never get the point, and it's too tiring for children to explain everything to them.

Later I chose another occupation. I learned to fly a plane. I travelled to all parts of the world; geography was really useful. I can tell the difference between China and Arizona at first sight. If you get lost at night, this knowledge is very valuable. During my life, I had to meet a lot of people who were busy with very important things. For a long time, I lived among adults.

They were clearly visible and I was able to watch them closely. But this didn't make my opinion about them better.

When I met someone who seemed smart I used to experiment. I showed my picture number one that I always carried with me. This way, I tried to find out whether a person could really understand everything correctly. But whether it was a man or a woman, everybody always said, "This is a hat." After such an answer, I never discussed boa constrictors, ancient life or stars with them. I came down to their level. I talked to them about bridges, golf, politics and ties. And adults were very happy to meet such an intelligent person.



Chapter II

I was rather lonely. I had nobody to talk to honestly until I had an accident while flying my plane. It happened in the Sahara Desert. Something went wrong with the engine. As there were no passengers or a mechanic with me, I decided to fix it myself. It was a matter of life or death for me: I hardly had enough water to survive for a week.

During the first night, I had to sleep on the sand

thousands of miles from any civilisation. I was more isolated than a sailor in a lifeboat after a shipwreck in the middle of the ocean. So you can imagine how amazed I was when a miraculous childish voice woke me up at dawn.

“Could you draw me a lamb?” it spoke.

”Excuse me?”

”Draw me a lamb!”

I jumped up wide awake. I blinked repeatedly. I looked around carefully. I saw the most astonishing creature that was looking at me with imperturbable seriousness. Here you can see the best picture of him I managed to draw. Without a doubt, my picture lacks the charm that the original character possessed.

However, this is not my fault. Because of the adults, I had lost my inspiration to become an artist when I was six, and never tried to draw anything else except the boa constrictor, inside and outside.



Now, when I was looking at this unexpected appearance, my eyes popped out of the head in amazement. May I remind you that I'd had an accident in the desert, thousands of miles from any settlement. And still, my little man wasn't wandering in sands exhausted from hunger, thirst or fear. Nothing about him pointed out a child lost in the desert, thousands of miles from any civilisation.

“What are you doing here?” I said to him finally when I found my voice.

“Could you draw me a lamb...” he answered very slowly as if it was a matter of high importance.

When everything is impossibly mysterious we just can't resist. No matter how ridiculous it looked, thousands of miles from human civilization, I took a piece of paper and a pen out of my pocket.

But then I remembered that my education was focused on Geography, History, Arithmetic and Grammar and I said to a little boy (though a bit sharply) that I couldn't draw.

“It doesn't matter. Draw me a lamb...” he replied.

But I have never drawn lambs. So I drew him on a paper one of the two pictures that I used to demonstrate so often. The Boa constrictor, inside. I was petrified when the little boy reacted with words.

“No, no, no! I don't want an elephant inside a boa

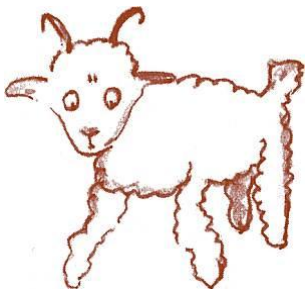
constrictor. Boa constrictors are very dangerous animals, and elephants are huge. Everything is very small where I live. I just need a lamb. Draw me the lamb.”

I drew another picture.



“No. This lamb looks very weak. Draw another one,” he looked carefully and said.

I made another picture.



My friend laughed gently.

“You can see yourself,” he said patiently. “This is not a lamb, this is a sheep. It has horns.”

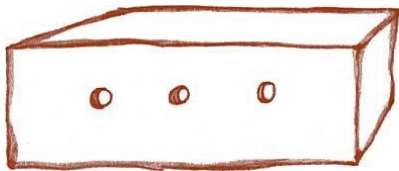
Then I remade the picture again.



But it was rejected like the previous ones.

“This one is too old. I want the one that will live for a very long time.”

By this time I'd had just about enough because I was in a hurry to sort out the engine. So I drew this picture.



In addition, I explained.

“This is only a box. The lamb, you were asking for, is inside.”

I was surprised when I spotted the enlightenment in a young judge's face.

“This is exactly what I wanted. How much grass do you think this lamb will need?”

“Why are you asking?”

“Because everything is very small where I live...”

“I am sure there will be enough grass for him,” I said. “I drew you a very small lamb.”

He bent over the picture.

“It is not so small. Look! It went to sleep...”

That’s how I met the Little Prince.



Chapter III

I had to spend a long time to find out where he was from. It seemed that the Little Prince who was asking me so many questions didn’t hear mine. Only

due to some accidentally spilt phrases, little by little I discovered the truth.

For example, when he saw my plane (I won't draw the plane, it's too hard for me).

“What kind of object is this?” he asked.

“This is not an object. It can fly. This is a plane. This is my plane.”

I was proud to tell him that I could fly a plane.

“What? Did you fall from the sky?” he cried then.

“I did”, I replied quietly.

“Oh, that's funny!” the Little Prince broke into gentle laughter. It made me furious because I prefer when my failures are treated seriously.

“So you also came down from above! What planet are you from?” he added then.

At that moment I saw the light in the impenetrable darkness of his presence.

“Are you from another planet?” I asked suddenly.

He didn't answer. He slightly shook his head leaving his eyes on the plane.

“That's true; it wouldn't be possible to fly from far away in this.”

And he was lost in thought for a while. Then he took my lamb out of his pocket and carefully examined his treasure.

You can imagine how intrigued I was by his confidence that other planets exist. So I tried really hard to find out as much as possible about this.

“My little man, where are you from? Where is this “where I live” you talk about? Where do you want to take your lamb?”



“The advantage of the box you gave me is that at night he can use it as a house”, he replied after a thoughtful silence.

“That’s right. If you behave I will give you a rope so you could tie him during the day, and a peg to tie the rope to.”

The Little Prince seemed to be taken aback by this offer.

“To tie him up! What a weird idea”

“But if you don’t tie him up he will go somewhere and get lost”, I said.

My friend broke into impetuous laughter.

“Where do you think he will go?”

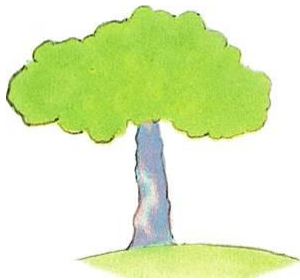
“Anywhere. Just over the hills and far away.”

Then the Little Prince said very seriously.

“It doesn’t matter. Everything is very small where I live!”

And then he added sadly.

“You just won’t be able to go far away...”



Chapter IV

This way, I learned the second important fact, that the planet the Little Prince came from, is a little bigger than a house! But I wasn’t very surprised. I knew that apart from big planets such as Earth, Jupiter, Mars and Venus that we have named, there are

hundreds of others. Some of them are so small they can hardly even be seen with a telescope.

When an astronomer discovers one of them he doesn't name it but gives it a number. Let's say, he could name it Asteroid 325.

I have serious grounds to believe that the planet the Little Prince came from is known as asteroid B-612. It was seen by a telescope only once. A Turkish astronomer managed to do it in 1909.

The astronomer presented his discovery at the International astronomic Congress. But he was wearing a Turkish outfit so nobody believed him. Adults are like this...

However, fortunately for the reputation of Asteroid-612, the Turkish dictator passed the law dictating that citizens had to wear European outfits under penalty of death. As a result, the astronomer, dressed with exquisite style and elegance, held another demonstration in 1920. This time everybody took his presentation seriously.



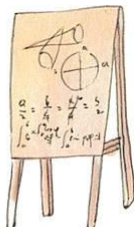
I only described you details about the asteroid and its number with the adults in mind. When you tell them that you found a new friend, they never ask you important questions. “How does his voice sound? What games does he love to play the most? Does he collect butterflies?” Instead, they try to find out. “How old is he? How many brothers does he have? How much does his father earn?”

On the basis of these numbers, they assume they know everything about him.

If you tell adults that you saw a beautiful house made from pink brick with geraniums in the window and pigeons on the roof, they won't be able to imagine the house.

They need to be told that you were in a house that

costs 20000 dollars. Then they will exclaim, “What a wonderful house!”



With the same result, you can tell them, “The evidence that the Little Prince existed is the fact that he was charming, he laughed and looked for a lamb. If someone needs a lamb this means he exists.” And what result do you expect? They will just shrug their shoulders and treat you as a child. But if you tell them

that the planet he came from is called Asteroid-612, then you will convince them and they won't ask you a lot of questions. They are like this. You shouldn't take their behaviour personally. Children always need to be patient with adults. However, we who understand life don't care about the numbers.

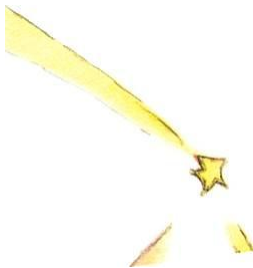
I would like to begin this story as a fairy-tale. I would say with pleasure,

“Once upon a time there was a Little Prince who lived on a planet that was hardly bigger than him, and he needed a lamb...”



For those who understand life, my story would seem more honest. You know I don't want anyone to read my story frivolously. I suffered too much to recollect and put everything down. It's been six years since my friend left me together with his lamb. When I try to describe him here it's only in order to make sure I will remember him. It's sad to forget a friend. Not everyone has a friend. If I forget him I will be like adults who are only interested in numbers... Once again, I bought colours and pencils for this reason in particular.

It's difficult to draw a picture again at my age if I haven't drawn anything, except boa constrictors inside and boa constrictors outside, from when I was six. I will try my best to make my portraits as close to reality as possible. But I am not sure I will be successful. One picture turns out to be good, and another one is far from realistic. I can also be mistaken how tall the Little Prince is: he is too tall in one picture and too short in another one. I have also some doubts about the colour of his outfit. I tried my best but it can be good here and bad there, however, I hope the final result is good. I can make mistakes in some details that are more important. But it's not my fault. My friend has never explained anything to me. He possibly thought we were the same. Unfortunately, I don't know how to see a lamb through a box. I may be an adult a little. I had to grow up.



Chapter V

Every day during our conversations, I found out more about the Little Prince's planet, how he left it and about his journeys. The information came slowly as it accidentally emerged from his thoughts. That's how on the third day, I learned about the danger from baobab trees.

This time, I need to thank the lamb again. Unexpectedly, the Little Prince asked me dubiously.

“Is it true that lambs eat small bushes?”

“That is true.”

“Good. I am glad.”

I couldn't understand why it was important for the lamb to eat small bushes. But the Little Prince added.

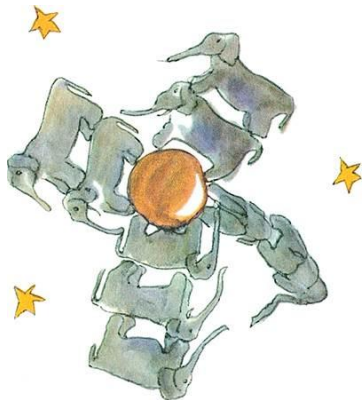
“It means they eat baobabs as well, doesn't it?”

I pointed out that baobabs are not small bushes, they are trees as big as a castle, and even if he takes a

herd of elephants they won't eat a single baobab tree.

My idea about the herd of elephants made the Little Prince laugh.

“We will have to put them on top of one another”, he said.



But he also commented wisely.

“Before becoming so big baobabs were small.”

“That's absolutely true”, I said. “But why do you need lambs to eat small baobabs?”

He replied immediately.

“What do you mean why!?”

As if he was talking about obvious things. And I had to think hard to solve this riddle myself.

I found out that the planet the Little Prince lived on, as any other planet had both good and bad plants.

As a result, there were good seeds from good plants and bad seeds from bad plants. But the seeds are invisible. They sleep deep below the ground until one of them decides to wake up. Then this little seed shyly at first, but later more confidently begins to push its small sprout up towards the sun. If it's a radish or rose it is allowed to grow as it wishes. But if it turns out to be a bad plant it should be destroyed the moment you identify it.

There were awful seeds of baobab trees on the planet that was the Little Prince's home. The ground of this planet was contaminated with them. You will never get rid of baobabs unless you catch them in time. It covers the whole planet. It penetrates the ground with its roots. And if a planet is too small and the number of baobabs is large they can break it into pieces...

