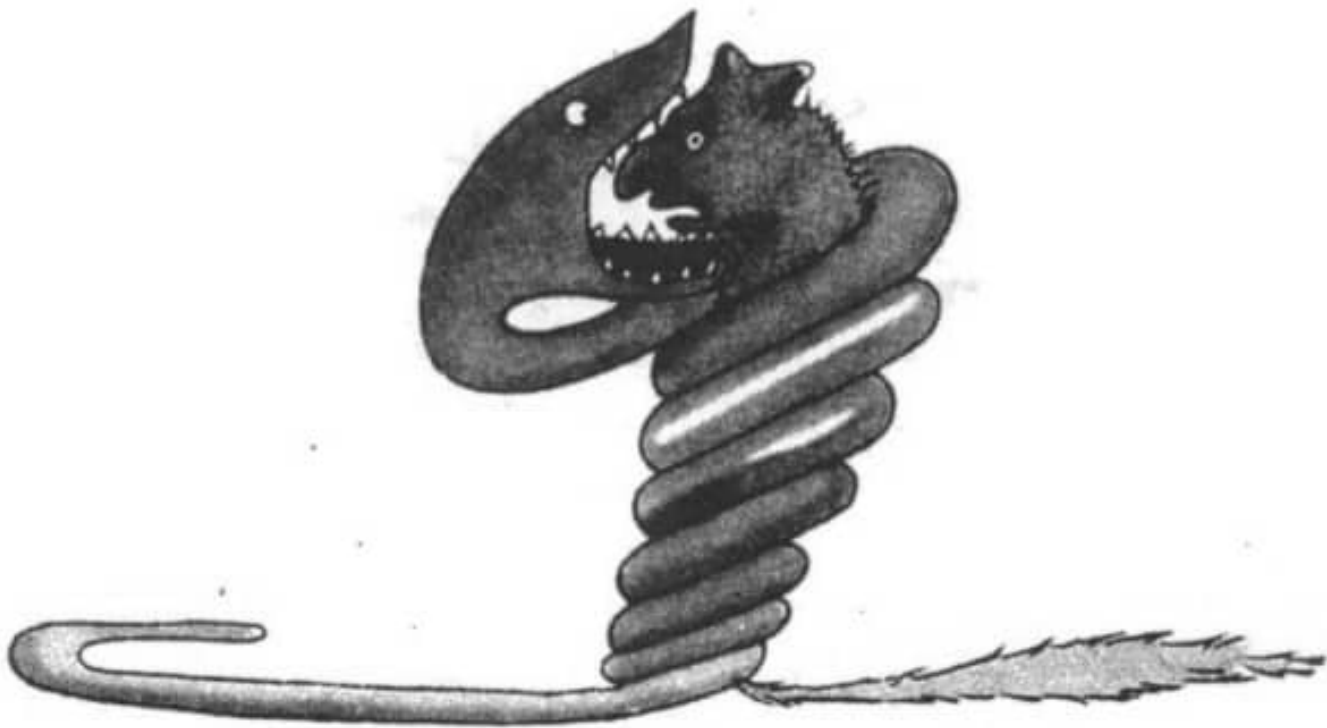


CHAPTER ONE

Once when I was six years old I saw a beautiful picture in a book about the primeval forest called *True Stories*. It showed a boa constrictor swallowing an animal. Here is a copy of the drawing.



The book stated: 'Boa constrictors swallow their prey whole without chewing it whereupon they can no longer move and sleep for six months digesting it.'

I then reflected deeply upon the adventures in the jungle and in turn succeeded in making my first

THE LITTLE PRINCE

drawing with a colour pencil. My drawing No. 1 was like this:



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

They answered: 'Why should anyone be frightened by a hat?' My drawing did not represent a hat. It was supposed to be a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. So I made another drawing of the inside of the boa constrictor to enable the grown-ups to understand. They always need explanations. My drawing No. 2 looked like this:



The grown-ups then advised me to give up my drawings of boa constrictors, whether from the inside

THE LITTLE PRINCE

or the outside, and to devote myself instead to geography, history, arithmetic and grammar. Thus it was that I gave up a magnificent career as a painter at the age of six. I had been disappointed by the lack of success of my drawing No. 1 and my drawing No. 2. Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves and it is rather tedious for children to have to explain things to them time and again.

So I had to choose another job and I learnt to pilot aeroplanes. I flew more or less all over the world. And indeed geography has been extremely useful to me. I am able to distinguish between China and Arizona at a glance. It is extremely helpful if one gets lost in the night.

As a result of which I have been in touch, throughout my life, with all kinds of serious people. I have spent a lot of time with grown-ups. I have seen them at very close quarters which I'm afraid has not greatly enhanced my opinion of them.

Whenever I met one who seemed reasonably clear-sighted to me, I showed them my drawing No 1, which I had kept, as an experiment. I wanted to find out whether he or she was truly understanding. But the answer was always: 'It is a hat.' So I gave up mentioning boa constrictors or primeval forests or stars. I would bring myself down to his or her level and talk about bridge, golf, politics and neckties. And the grown-up would be very pleased to have met such a sensible person.

CHAPTER TWO

Thus I lived alone, with no one I could really talk to, until I had an accident in the Sahara Desert six years ago. Something broke down in my engine. And since there was neither a mechanic nor a passenger with me, I prepared myself for a difficult but what I hoped would be a successful repair. It was a matter of life or death for me. I had scarcely enough drinking water for a week.

On the first night, I fell asleep on the sand, a thousand miles from any human habitation. I was far more isolated than a shipwrecked sailor on a raft in the middle of the ocean. So you can imagine my surprise at sunrise when an odd little voice woke me up.

It said: 'Please . . . draw me a sheep.'

'What?'

'Draw me a sheep.'

I jumped up, completely thunderstruck. I rubbed my eyes, blinked hard and looked carefully around me. And I discovered an extraordinary little boy watching me gravely. Here is the best portrait I was able to draw of him later. But of course, my drawing is not half as charming as its model. It is not my fault. I had been discouraged by grown-ups in my career as a painter when I was six years old, and I hadn't learnt to draw anything with the exception of boas from the outside and boas from the inside.

I therefore stared in total astonishment at this

THE LITTLE PRINCE



THE LITTLE PRINCE

sudden apparition. Do not forget that I was a thousand miles away from any inhabited region.

But my little chap did not seem to be either lost or dead tired or dying of hunger, thirst or fear. He did not look like a child lost in the middle of the desert, a thousand miles from any inhabited region.

When I finally managed to speak, I said to him: 'But . . . what are you doing here?'

Whereupon he repeated softly and gravely: 'Please draw me a sheep '

When a mystery is too overpowering, one dare not disobey. Absurd as it seemed to me a thousand miles from any human habitation and in danger of death, I took a sheet of paper and my fountain pen out of my pocket. But I suddenly remembered that my studies had been concentrated on geography, history, arithmetic and grammar, so I told the little chap (a little crossly) that I did not know how to draw.

He replied: 'That doesn't matter. Draw me a sheep.'

Since I had never drawn a sheep I drew for him one of the two pictures I had drawn before. That of the boa constrictor from the outside. And I was astounded to hear the little fellow saying: 'No! No! I don't want an elephant inside a boa. A boa constrictor is a very dangerous creature and an elephant is very cumbersome. Everything is very small where I live. I need a sheep. Draw me a sheep.'

So I drew.



THE LITTLE PRINCE

He looked at it carefully and said: 'No. That one is already very sick. Draw me another one.'

And I drew.

My little friend said gently and indulgently: 'Don't you see that is not a sheep, it is a ram. It has horns . . .'



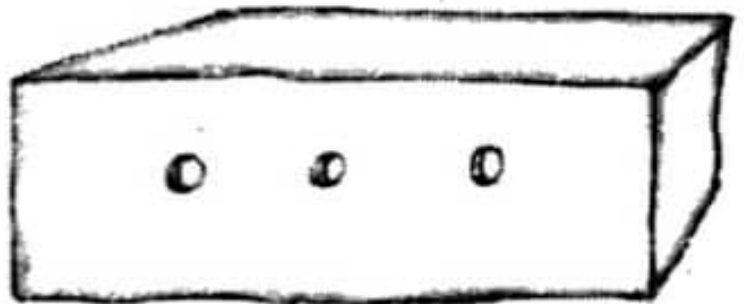
Once again, I made another drawing.

But it was rejected too, like the previous ones.

'This one is too old. I want a sheep that will live for a long time.'

My patience had run out by then as I was in a hurry to start dismantling my engine as soon as possible, so I scribbled this drawing. And I explained: 'That is only the box. The sheep you asked for is inside.'

But I was very surprised to see the face of my young judge lighting up: 'That is exactly the way I wanted it. Do you think this sheep will need a lot of grass?'



THE LITTLE PRINCE

‘Why?’

‘Because where I live everything is so small . . . ’

‘There should be enough grass for him. I have given you a very small sheep.’

He bent his head over the drawing: ‘Not so small that . . . Look. He has gone to sleep.’

And that is how I met the little prince.

CHAPTER THREE

It took me a long time to find out where he came from. The little prince who asked me so many questions never seemed to hear mine. It is thanks to the odd word, here and there, that everything was revealed to me.

For instance, when he saw my aeroplane for the first time (I shall not draw my aeroplane; that would be far too complicated for me), he asked me: 'What is that object?'

'It is not an object. It flies. It is an aeroplane. It is my aeroplane.'

And I was proud to be able to tell him that I could fly.

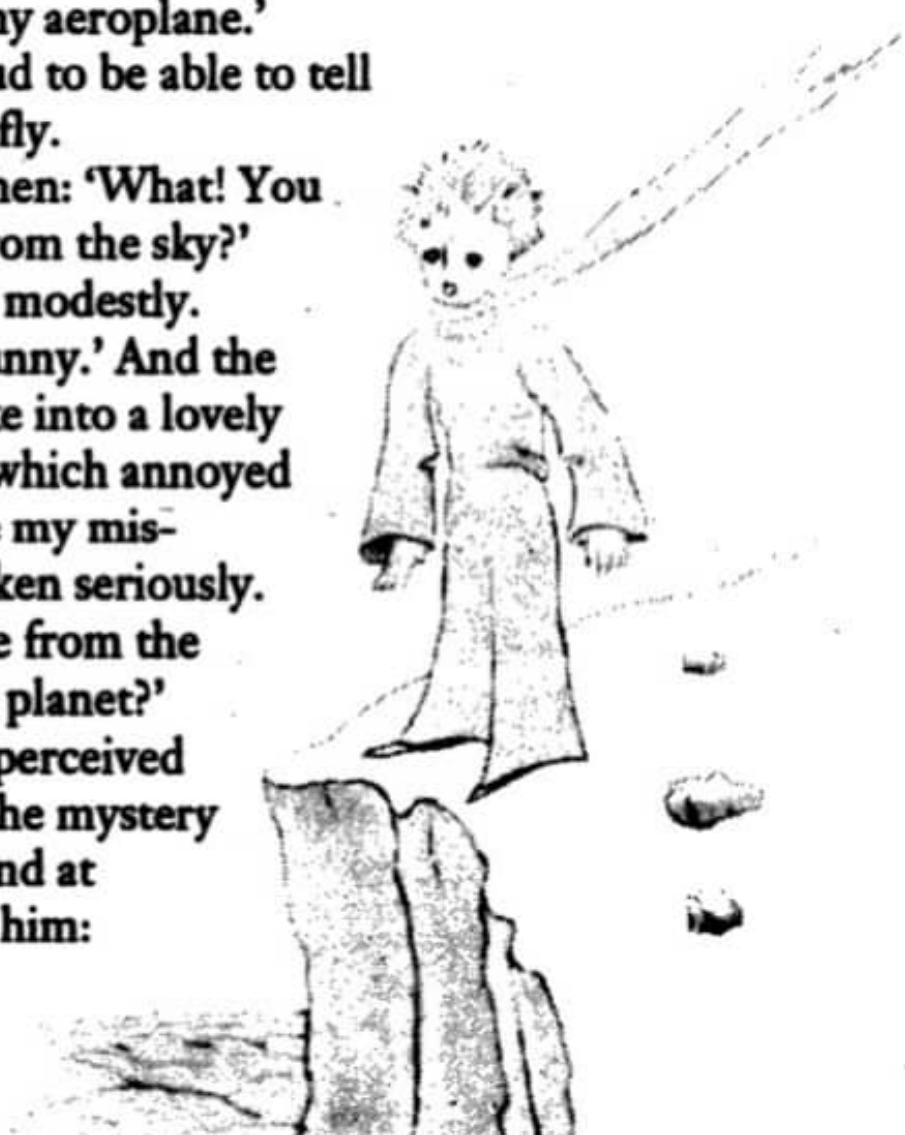
He cried out then: 'What! You dropped down from the sky?'

'Yes,' I replied modestly.

'Oh! That is funny.' And the little prince broke into a lovely peal of laughter which annoyed me no end. I like my misfortunes to be taken seriously.

'So you too come from the sky. From which planet?'

I immediately perceived a ray of light in the mystery of his presence and at once questioned him:



THE LITTLE PRINCE

‘So you’ve come from another planet?’

But he didn’t reply. He nodded gently whilst gazing at my aeroplane.

‘It is true that on that you can’t have come from very far away . . .’

And he sank into a long reverie. Then, taking my sheep out of his pocket, he contemplated his treasure.

You can imagine how my curiosity was aroused by this half confidence about ‘the other planets’. So I tried to find out a little more.

‘Where do you come from, my little fellow? Where is this “where I live” of which you speak? Where do you want to take my sheep?’

After a thoughtful silence, he replied: ‘What I like about the box you have given me is that he can use it as his house at night.’

‘Of course. And if you are good, I shall also give you a rope to tie him up during the day. And a post to tie him to.’

But the little prince seemed shocked by my proposal.

‘Tie him up? What a funny idea.’

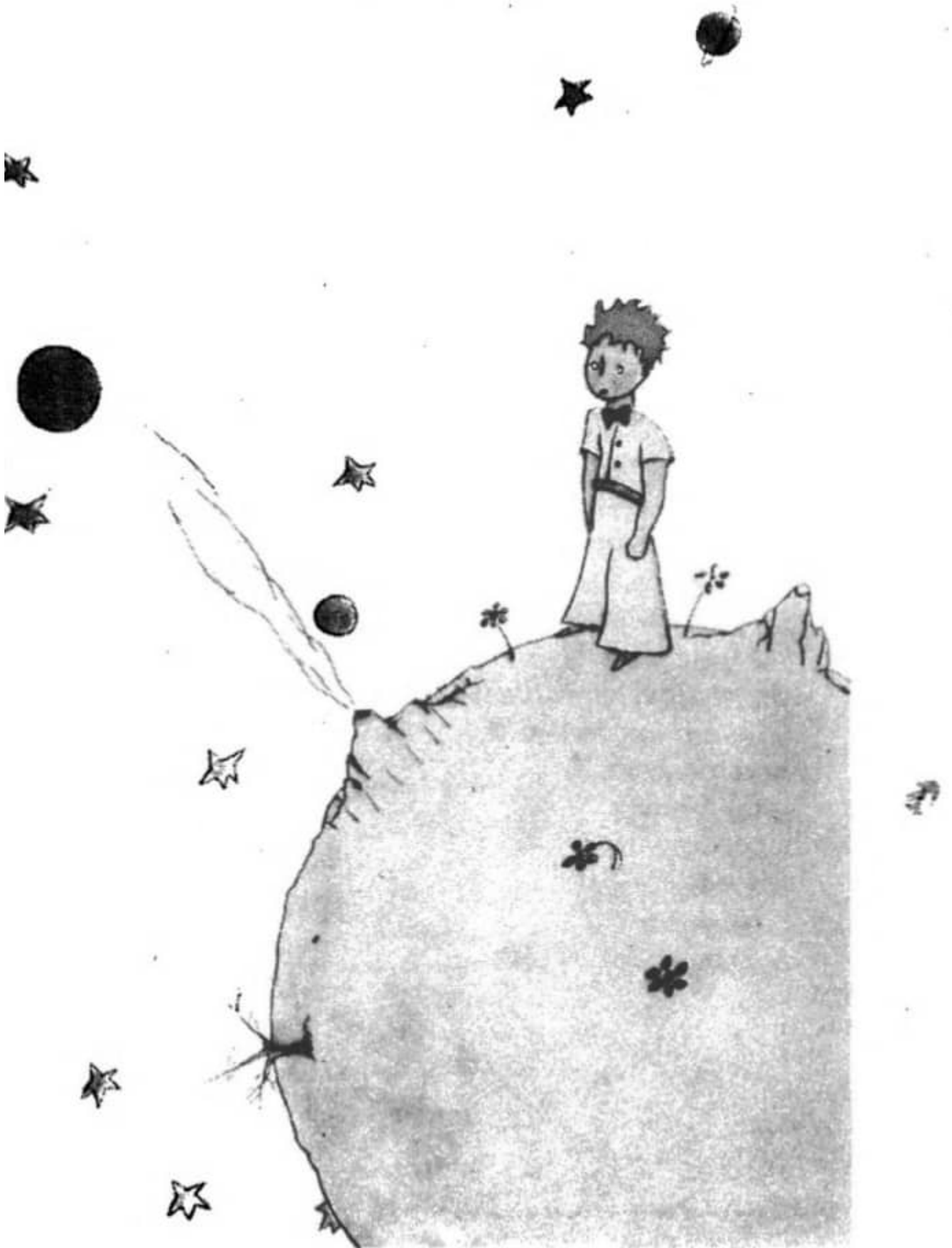
‘But if you do not tie him up, he will wander off and get lost.’

My friend burst out laughing again: ‘But where would he go?’

‘Anywhere. Just straight ahead.’

Whereupon the little prince remarked gravely: ‘It wouldn’t matter. Everything is so small where I live.’ And, perhaps a little wistfully, he added: ‘Straight ahead of oneself, one cannot go very far . . .’

THE LITTLE PRINCE



CHAPTER FOUR

Thus I had learned a second very important thing. That his planet of origin was scarcely larger than a house.

But that did not really surprise me very much. I knew full well that apart from the large planets, such as Earth, Jupiter, Mars and Venus, which have been given names, there are hundreds of others which are sometimes so small that it is difficult to see them through a telescope. When an astronomer discovers one of them, he does not give it a name but a number. He might call it, for example, 'Asteroid 325'.

I have serious reasons to believe that the little prince's planet of origin was the asteroid known as B-612.

This asteroid has only been observed once through a telescope by a Turkish astronomer in 1909.



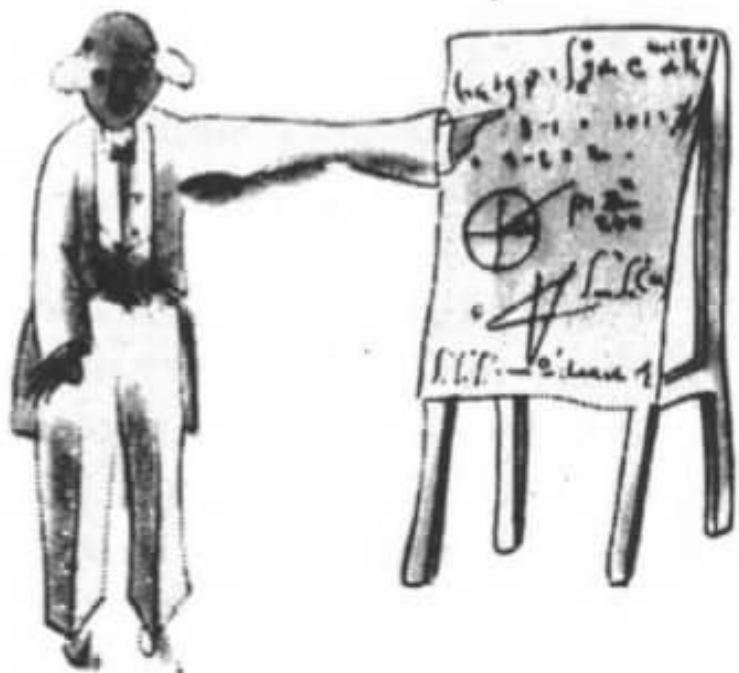
THE LITTLE PRINCE



At the time, he organised a great demonstration of his discovery at an International Astronomical Congress. But because of his Turkish attire, nobody believed him. Grown-ups are like that.

Fortunately for the reputation of Asteroid B-612, however, a Turkish dictator imposed European costume upon his subjects under pain of death. So the astronomer repeated his demonstration in 1920, dressed in an elegant suit. And this time, everybody was convinced.

If I have told you these details about Asteroid B-612 and revealed its number to you, it is on account of grown-ups. Grown-ups love figures. When you talk to them about a new friend, they never ask questions about essential matters. They never say to



THE LITTLE PRINCE

you: 'What does his voice sound like? What games does he prefer? Does he collect butterflies?' They ask you: 'How old is he? How many brothers does he have? How much does he weigh? How much money does his father earn?' It is only then that they feel they know him. If you were to mention to grown-ups: 'I've seen a beautiful house built with pink bricks, with geraniums on the windowsills and doves on the roof . . . ' they would not be able to imagine such a house. You would have to say to them: 'I saw a house worth a hundred thousand pounds.' Then they would exclaim: 'Oh! How lovely.'

Thus if you said to them: 'The proof that the little prince really existed was that he was enchanting, that he laughed and that he wanted a sheep. Now when you want a sheep, it proves that you exist,' they will shrug their shoulders and will treat you as if you were a child. But if you say to them: 'The planet he came from was Asteroid B-612,' then they will be convinced and leave you alone with their questions. That is the way they are. One must not hold it against them. Children should show great understanding towards grown-ups.

But, of course, for those of us who understand life, we could not care less about figures. I should have liked to start this story like a fairy tale. I should have liked to say: 'Once upon a time there was a little prince who lived on a planet scarcely bigger than himself and who had need of a friend.' For those who understand what life is all about, it would have seemed closer to the truth.

THE LITTLE PRINCE

For I do not want my book to be read carelessly. I have experienced so much grief in setting down these memories. Six years have already elapsed since my little friend left me, with his sheep. If I am attempting to describe him, it is in order not to forget him. It is sad to forget a friend. Not every one has had a friend. And I could become like grown-ups who are only concerned with figures. That is why I have bought a box of paints and some pencils. It is hard to take up drawing again at my age, having never made any attempts other than drawing a boa from the outside and a boa from the inside at the age of six. I shall certainly endeavour to make my portraits as true to life as possible. But I am not at all sure of succeeding. One drawing is all right, another shows no resemblance at all to its subject. The height is not right either. Here, the little prince is too tall. There, he is too small. And I am not sure about the colour of his suit. So I persist by trial and error and to the best of my ability. I shall also make mistakes about some more important details. But I must be forgiven for that. My friend never explained anything to me. Perhaps he thought I was like him. But, unfortunately, I cannot see sheep through boxes. Perhaps I am a little like grown-ups. I am getting old.

CHAPTER FIVE

Each day, I learnt something about the planet, about the little prince's departure from it, about his journey. The information would come very slowly, following the course of the little prince's thoughts. Thus it was that on the third day, I heard about the catastrophe of the baobabs.

Once again, it was thanks to the sheep, for suddenly the little prince questioned me as if seized by a grave doubt: 'It is true, is it not, that sheep eat little shrubs?'

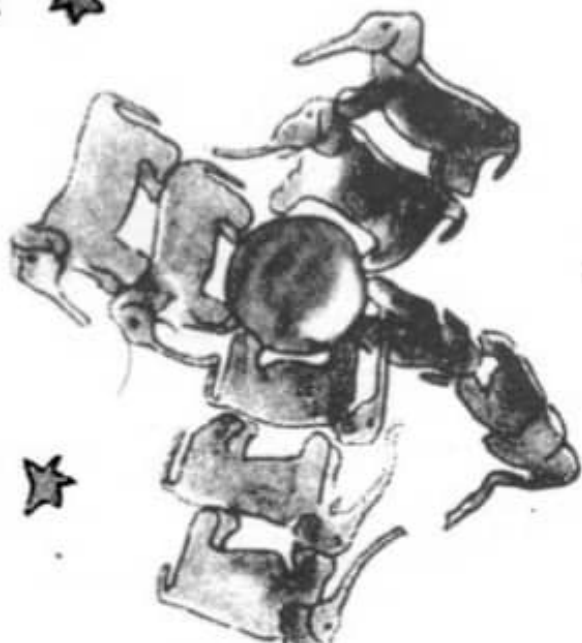
'Yes, that is true.'

'Ah! I'm glad.'

I did not understand why the fact that sheep eat shrubs was so important. But the little prince added: 'Therefore, they also eat baobabs?'

I pointed out to the little prince that baobabs are not little bushes but trees as tall as churches, and that even if he were to take a whole herd of elephants with him, the herd would not be able to eat up one single baobab.

The little prince laughed 
at the idea of a herd of
elephants: 'One would
have to pile them up on
top of one another.'
But then he remarked
wisely: 'Before they
grow to such a size,



THE LITTLE PRINCE

planets, there were good plants and bad plants. Good seeds come from good plants and bad seeds come from bad plants. But seeds are invisible. They remain dormant in the depth of the earth until one of them suddenly decides to wake up. It stretches itself, timidly at first, and then begins to push a charming little sprig inoffensively towards the sun. If it is merely a sprout of radish or a sprig of rosebush, it can be left to grow as it wishes. But if it is a weed, it should be torn out at once, as soon as it is recognised. It so happens that there were some terrible seeds on the little prince's planet . . . they were baobab seeds. The soil of the planet was infested with them. But if you intervene too late, you will never get rid of a baobab. It spreads over the entire planet. Its roots bore clear through it. And if the planet is too small and if there are too many baobabs, the planet explodes.

'It is a question of discipline,' said the little prince to me later on. 'When you have finished your toilet in the morning, it is time to attend to the planet's toilet with great care. One must pull out the baobabs very regularly as soon as they can be distinguished from the rosebushes they resemble so closely when they are very young. It is very tedious work but also very easy.'

And one day he advised me to try and make a beautiful drawing so as to impress all this upon the children where I live. He said to me: 'If they travel one day, it might be of use to them. It may be convenient sometimes to put off one's work until another day. But in the case of baobabs, it is always catastrophic to do so. I knew of a planet inhabited by

THE LITTLE PRINCE



THE LITTLE PRINCE

baobabs start out by being small.'

'That is true. But why do you want your sheep to eat the small baobabs?'

He answered me: 'Oh! come, come!' as if this was self-evident.

I had to exert considerable mental effort to work the problem out for myself.

It seemed that on the little prince's planet, as on all

