

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

The Little Prince

*I believe that for his escape he took advantage
of the migration of a flock of wild birds.*






ANTOINE DE
SAINT-EXUPÉRY




The Little Prince



with illustrations
by the author

Translated by
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Anaconda

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TO LEON WERTH

I apologize to the children for dedicating this book to a grown-up. I have a valid excuse: this person is my best friend in the world. I have another excuse: this grown-up person can understand everything, even children's books. I have a third excuse: this grown-up lives in France where he is hungry and cold. He really needs to be comforted. If all these excuses are not enough, I dedicate this book to the child that this grown-up once was. All grown-ups were children once. (But few of them remember it.) So I correct my dedication:

TO LEON WERTH
WHEN HE WAS A LITTLE BOY



Once when I was six years old I saw a magnificent picture in a book, called *True Stories from Nature*, about the primeval forest. It was a picture of a boa constrictor swallowing a wild animal. Here is a copy of the drawing.

In the book it said: 'Boa constrictors swallow their prey whole, without chewing. Afterwards they can no longer move, and they sleep for six months while they digest it.'

After much thought and deliberation over the adventures in the wilderness, I managed to make my first drawing with a coloured pencil. My Drawing Number One. It looked something like this:



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

They answered: 'What's scary about a hat?'

My drawing was not a picture of a hat. It was a picture of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. Then I drew the inside view of a boa constrictor so the grown-ups could understand it. They always need explanations. My Drawing Number Two looked like this:



This time the grown-ups advised me to set aside my drawings of boa constrictors, whether from the inside or the outside view, and instead devote myself to geography, history, arithmetic, and grammar. And thus, at age six, I gave up on a magnificent art career. I had been disheartened by the failure of my Drawing Number One and my Drawing Number Two. Grown-ups never figure anything out on their own, and it is tiresome for children to have to always give them explanations.

So I chose another profession and learned how to fly aeroplanes. I have flown around the world, and

knowing geography has indeed been very helpful. I learned how to distinguish China from Arizona at just a glance, which is very useful if you get lost at night.

Throughout my life I've had many encounters with many serious people. I have a great deal of experience with grown-ups. I have seen them up close. And that hasn't improved my opinion of them very much.

Whenever I met a grown-up who seemed to me a bit clear-headed, I would show him my Drawing Number One that I have always kept with me. I wanted to find out if the person was truly understanding or not. But the person would always answer, 'That is a hat.' So I would never talk to that person about boa constrictors or primeval forests or stars. I would bring myself down to his or her level. I would talk about bridge, golf, politics, and neckties. And the grown-up would be greatly pleased to have met such a sensible man.

II

So I lived my life alone, without anyone who I could really talk to, until my plane broke down in the Saharan desert six years ago. There was something wrong with my engine. Since I didn't have a mechanic or any passengers with me, I attempted to fix the difficult repairs all alone. It was a question of life or death for me: I had scarcely enough water to drink for eight days.

The first night I went to sleep on the sand, a thousand miles from any inhabited land. I was more isolated than a shipwrecked sailor on a raft in the middle of the ocean. Thus you can imagine my amazement, at sunrise, when I was awakened by an odd little voice. It said:

'Please...draw me a sheep!'

'What?'

'Draw me a sheep...'

I jumped to my feet, as if struck by lightning. I blinked my eyes hard. I looked carefully all around. And I saw the most extraordinary man standing there staring at me intensely. Here is the best portrait that I was, later, able to make of him. But my drawing is, of

course, much less charming than the model himself. It is not my fault, however. The grown-ups discouraged me from pursuing a career in art when I was six years old, and I never did learn how to draw anything other than boa constrictors from the outside and from the inside.

I stared at this sudden apparition with my eyes wide open in awe. Remember, I was a thousand miles away from any inhabited area. And yet my little man didn't appear to be lost, nor dying of exhaustion, hunger, thirst, or fear. He didn't look at all as though he were lost in the middle of the desert, a thousand miles from any inhabited area. When I was finally able to speak, I said to him:

‘But...what are you doing here?’

And he answered me once again, very slowly, as if he were talking about something very serious:

‘Please...draw me a sheep.’

When a mystery is too great, one doesn't dare to disobey. Strange as it might seem to me, a thousand miles away from any populated area and in danger of death, I took a sheet of paper and a fountain pen out of my pocket. But then I remembered I had mostly studied geography, history, arithmetic, and grammar, and I told the little chap (who was a bit disgruntled) that I did not know how to draw. He answered me:



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

‘That doesn’t matter. Draw me a sheep.’

Since I had never drawn a sheep before, I made him one of the only two drawings I knew how to draw. The one of the boa constrictor from the outside. And I was astounded to hear the little fellow respond with:

‘No. I do not want an elephant inside a boa constrictor. Boa constrictors are very dangerous and elephants are very cumbersome. My home is quite small. What I need is a sheep. Draw me a sheep.’



So I made a drawing.

He looked at it carefully, then he said:

‘No. This sheep is already very sick. Draw another one.’

So I did.

My friend smiled at me kindly and gently.

‘You see,’ he said, ‘this is not a sheep. This is a ram. It has horns.’

So I did it over once again.

But it was rejected, too, just like the others. ‘This one is too old. I want a sheep that will live a long time.’



Now, as I was running out of

patience, keen to begin disassembling my engine, I made this sketch and tossed it over.

And I explained:

