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THE LITTLE PRINCE

a philosophical fairytale



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TO LEON WERTH

I plea forgiveness of the children for dedicating this book to a grown-up person. I've got a serious excuse—this grown-up person is the best friend I've ever had in the world. I have another reason: this adult is able to understand everything, even books for children. I have a third reason—this grown-up person lives in France where he is hungry and cold. He needs to be encouraged. If all these reasons are not enough, I will dedicate the book to the child from whom this grown-up person grew. All grown-ups were once children (although few of them remember it). And so, I correct my dedication:

*TO LEON WERTH
WHEN HE WAS A LITTLE BOY*

CHAPTER ONE

When I was only 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 in the act of swallowing a young animal. Here is a copy of the drawing.



The book would say: "Boa constrictors swallow their prey whole, without chewing it. After that they are not able to move, and they sleep through the six months that they need for digestion."

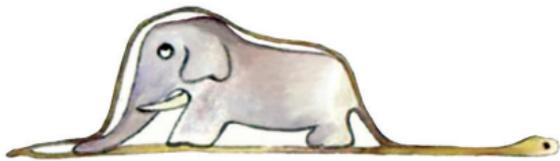
Then, I reflected a lot about the adventures in the jungle, and after some work with a colored pencil I succeeded in making my first drawing. My Drawing Number One. It looked like this:



I showed my masterpiece to some grown-ups, and asked them whether the drawing frightened them.

Yet they answered: "Frighten? Why should anyone be frightened by a hat?"

My drawing did not represent a hat. It was a picture of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. But in order to the grown-ups to be able to understand it, I drew the inside of the boa constrictor, so that the grown-ups could see it clearly. They always need to have things explained. My Drawing Number Two looked like this:



The grown-ups' response, this time, was to advise me to lay aside my drawings of boa constrictors, whether from the inside or the outside, and instead to get myself interested in geography, history, arithmetic and grammar. That's why, at the age of six, I gave up what might have been a magnificent career as a painter. I had been disheartened by the failure of my Drawing Number One and my Drawing Number Two. Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them.

So, then I chose a different profession, and learned to pilot airplanes. I've flown some over all parts of the world; and it is true that geography has been very useful to me. At a glance I can tell

China from Arizona. If one gets lost in the night, such knowledge is helpful.

Thus, in the course of my life I've had a great many encounters with a great many people who have been concerned with serious matters. I've lived a great deal among grown-ups. I've seen them intimately, close at hand. And that hasn't much improved my opinion of them.

Whenever I happen to meet one of them who seemed to me a little clear-headed, I tried the experiment of showing them my Drawing Number One, which I've always kept. In doing so I would try to find out if that was a person of true understanding. But, whoever it was, they would always say: "That's a hat." Therefore, I would never talk to that person about boa constrictors, or primeval forests, or stars. I would bring myself down to their level. I would talk to them about bridge, and golf, and politics, and neckties. And the grown-up would be greatly pleased to have met such a reasonable man.

CHAPTER II

So, I lived my life alone, without anyone that I could really talk to, until I had an accident with my plane in the Desert of Sahara, six years ago. Something was broken in the engine. And as I had with me neither a mechanic nor any passengers, I set myself to attempt the difficult repairs all alone. It was a question of life or death for me: I had hardly enough drinking water to last a week.

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

- If you please... draw me a sheep!
- What?!

—Draw me a sheep!

I jumped up to my feet, as if I were completely thunderstruck. I rubbed my eyes hard. I looked carefully all around me. And I saw a most extraordinary small person, who stood there examining me with great seriousness. Here you may see the best portrait that, later on, I was able to make of him. But my drawing is certainly very much less charming than its model. That, however, is not my fault. The grown-ups discouraged me in my painter's career when I was six years old, and I never learned to draw anything, except boas from the outside and boas from the inside.

Now I stared at this sudden apparition with my eyes fairly starting out of my head in astonishment. Remember, I found myself in the desert a thousand miles from any inhabited area. And yet, my little man seemed neither to be straying uncertainly among the sands, nor to be fainting from fatigue or hunger or thirst, or fear. Nothing about him gave any suggestion of a child

lost in the middle of the desert, a thousand miles away from any human habitation. When at last I was able to speak, I said to him:

—But, what are you doing here?

And in answer he repeated, very slowly, as if he were speaking of a greatly serious matter:

—Would you please... draw me a sheep?

When a mystery is way too overwhelming, one dare not disobey. Absurd as it might seem to me, a thousand miles from any human habitation and in danger of death, I took out of my pocket a sheet of paper and my fountain-pen. But then I remembered how my studies had been concentrated on geography, history, arithmetic, and grammar, and I told the little fellow (a bit in a bad mood, too) that I did not know how to draw. He answered me:

—That doesn't matter. Draw me a sheep...

As I had never drawn a sheep I drew for him one of the two pictures I was able to produce. It was the one of the boa constrictor from the

outside. And, I was astounded to hear the little guy respond with these words:

—No, no, no! I do not want an elephant inside a boa constrictor. A boa constrictor is a very dangerous animal, and an elephant is very cumbersome. Back where I live, everything is very small. What I need is a sheep. Draw me a sheep.

So then I drew this one.



He looked at it carefully, and then he said:

—No. This sheep is already very ailing. Make another one for me.

And I did:



My friend smiled gently and indulgently.
—You see yourself,—he said,—that this is not
a sheep. This is a ram. It has horns...
So then I did my drawing over once more.



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