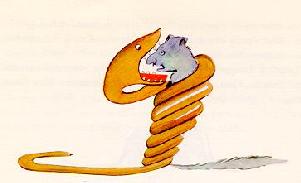
Felicia Prestwood

**The Little Prince – Antoine de Saint-Exupery**

**I**

One time, when I was six years old I looked through a book called “True Stories,” a magnificent story of the virgin forest. It showed a boa swallowing a wild beast. Here I have a copy of the picture.



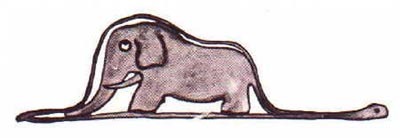
The book said: “Boas swallow their prey whole, without chewing it, and then after they don’t move and lay down to sleep for six months of digestion.”

I then began to think about the adventures of the forest, and with a colored pencil I completed my first sketch. Drawing number 1 looks like this:



I showed my masterpiece to the grown-ups and I asked them if my picture scared them. They answered me: “Why would a picture of a hat scare me?”

But my drawing wasn’t a picture of a hat at all. It was a picture of a boa that had just eaten an elephant. I had to draw the elephant inside the boa, so that the grown-ups could understand. I always have to explain things to them. Drawing number 2 looks like this:



The grown-ups told me that I ought to put aside the pictures of the boas and that it would be better to dedicate my time to studying geography, history, calculus and grammar.

So it went, at the age of six, I abandoned my magnificent career as an artist. The failure of my drawing number 1 and drawing number 2 discouraged me. The older people never understand anything on their own and the children have to explain everything to them all the time.

I then had to choose another job so I learned to fly planes. I flew all over the world. It’s true that geography is very useful; I could, at only a glance, distinguish Arizona from China. It works well if one is lost at night.

For that reason, a majority of my life I met a quantity of important people. I lived with many grown-ups, and I have gotten to know them well. My opinion about them has not improved very much.

Whenever I met someone that seemed intelligent, I always went back to trying to explain my drawing number 1, which I have always kept. I wanted to know if they could understand it, but their answer was always the same: “It’s a hat.” I then no longer spoke to them about my boas, or of virgin forests or stars. So I stooped to their level. I spoke of bridge, golf, politics and ties. And the grown-up was always left very satisfied to have met a man so sensible.

**II**

And so, I lived alone, without anyone to talk to truly, until my plane broke down in the Sahara desert six years ago. Something had been broken in the motor. Since I didn’t have a mechanic or passengers, I had to arrange the difficult reparation by myself. This was for me an issue of life or death. I only had water for eight days.

The first night, I went to sleep on the sand, a thousand miles from any inhabited region. I was more alone than a shipwrecked person on an island in the middle of the ocean. Imagine my surprise when at dawn, I awoke to a strange little voice that said:

-“Please, draw me a lamb!”

-Eh?

“Draw me a lamb!”

I stood and jumped, as if I was struck by lightning. I rubbed my eyes to see better. I saw a very extraordinary little man who was observing me thoughtfully. Here I have a portrait that later I was able to draw of him. Clearly my picture is less enchanting than the model, but it’s not my fault. The older people discouraged me and ruined my career as a painter when I was only six years old, and I never learned to draw properly, all I could draw was boas from the outside and boas from the inside.

I looked at this apparition with round eyes of astonishment. Don’t forget that he found me a thousand miles from any inhabited region. This young man, however, didn’t appear lost, fatigued, or dying of hunger or thirst or of fear. He didn’t have the appearance of a lost boy in the middle of the desert, a thousand miles from civilization. When finally I began to speak, I said:

-But, “What are you doing here?”

Then, very smoothly, as if he was saying something very important and serious, repeated, “Please…draw me a lamb…”

When the mystery is too impressive you can’t disobey. Although it appeared absurd, a thousand miles from inhabited land and with the risk of death, I took from my bag and a piece of paper and a fountain pen. I remembered then that I had only been studying geography, history, calculus, and grammar and I grumpily told the young boy I didn’t know how to draw. He responded:

* “Doesn’t matter. Draw me a lamb.”

I had never drawn a lamb before, so instead I made for him one of the two pictures that I was able to do; the boa from the outside. I was astonished when I heard the boy respond;

“No! No! I don’t want an elephant inside a boa. A boa is something very dangerous and an elephant is too big. In my house all is little. I need a lamb. Draw me a lamb.”

Then I sketched. The young man watched me attentively. Then he said:

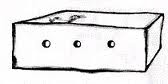
“No! This one is very sick. Make another one.”

I went back to the drawing. My friend smiled kindly, but with forbearance.

-“Very well then…it isn’t a lamb, but a ram. It has horns…redo it.” I made another picture. But it was rejected too, like the previous one.

“This lamb is too old. I want a lamb that will live a long time”

I was done being patient and I was anxious to start fixing my engine. I scribbled a picture and sharply I told him. –“This is a box. The lamb that you want is inside it.”



I was surprised to see the illuminated face of my young judge.

-“Exactly what I wanted! Do you think this lamb needs a lot of grass? “

-“Why?”

“Because my house is very small”

I was sure it would be enough. It was only a tiny lamb. He tilted his head over the picture: “Well, not so small…look he already fell asleep!”

And that’s how I met the little prince.

**III**

It took me a long time to understand where he had come from. The little prince hounded me with questions, and he appeared to never hear mine. They were words said by fate that, little by little, eventually revealed all. So, when he saw my plane for the first time (I wouldn’t draw my plane because it’s a drawing too complicated for me), he asked me: “and what is this thing?”

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

And I felt proud to make it known that I knew how to fly. He then exclaimed, “What! Have you fallen from the sky?”

Yes, I said modestly.

“Ah! How funny.”

And the little prince released a lovely burst of laughter that really irritated me. I like my misfortunes to be taken seriously. After, he added, “then, you also come from the sky! What planet are you from?”

All of a sudden a ray of light appeared in the mystery of his presence and I swiftly interrogated –“so you come from another planet?”

But he didn’t answer. He just looked at my plane, gently shaking his head:

-“The truth is that, you couldn’t have come from very far…”

And the little prince immersed into a fantasy that lasted a long time. After taking my lamb from his bag, he contemplated his treasure.

You could already imagine how intrigued I was with this semi intimate conversation about “the planets.” I tried to investigate more:

-“From where do you come, my dear little prince? Where do you live? To where do you want to take my lamb?”

After meditating in silence he answered me:

“The good thing about the box that you have given me is that it will function as his house for a couple of nights.”

“Clearly, and if you are good I will also give you a rope that you can use to tie him up to a post during the day. My suggestion appeared to antagonize the little prince.

“Tie it? That’s a weird idea.”

“Well if you don’t tie it, who knows where he will go and you might lose him…”

And my friend released a different type of laughter.

“But, where would he want to go?”

“He could go anywhere. The first path he finds…”

Then the little prince, in a grave voice said,

“Doesn’t matter. The place where I live is so small!” And perhaps a little too melancholy, he added:

“But one won’t get very far with the first path he finds…” 🡨does this make sense? I know what I mean but idk if it’s clear

**IV**

I then uncovered a second detail that was very important: the planet the little prince was from was only as big as a house!

This didn’t surprise me at all. I knew that besides the big planets like Earth, Jupiter, Mars, and Venus which have been given names, there are hundreds that are at times so small that it is difficult to see them by telescope. When an astronomer discovers some of them, they just give it a number for the name. It could be called, for example, “Asteroid 3251.”

I have powerful reasons to believe that the planet he came from is the asteroid B 612. This asteroid has only been seen one time through a telescope by a Turkish astronomer in 1909.

This Turkish astronomer revealed his discovery to the International Congress of Astronomy, but no one believed him because of what he was wearing. This is how grown-ups are.

Fortunately for the reputation of the asteroid B 612, a Turkish dictator forced his town to dress European, or they received the death penalty. The astronomer repeated his demonstration in 1920, dressed in a very elegant suit. And this time the whole world agreed with him.

If I have counted these details about the asteroid B612, and revealed its number to you, it’s because of the grown-ups. Adults adore numbers and figures. When one speaks to a new friend they never ask essential questions. They never say, “What does his voice sound like?” “What games do you like play?” “Do you collect butterflies?” Instead they always ask, “How old are you?” “How many siblings do you have?” “How much do you weigh?” “How much does your father make?” Only then do they want to get to know you. If you said to an adult, “I saw a beautiful house made of red brick with geraniums in the windows and doves on the roof…” they wouldn’t follow what you’re saying. Instead you have to tell them, “I saw a house that cost one hundred million dollars.” Then they’d exclaim, “How lovely it must be!”

If I tried to prove to them that the little prince exists by saying that he had been charming, he laughed and that he wanted a lamb (because wanting a lamb proves you exist), they’d shrug their shoulders and treat me as if I were a child. But if one were to say: “The planet he came from is the asteroid B 612,” then they would be convinced and they wouldn’t ask any more questions. This is how they are, they aren’t to blame. Kids must be very gentle with the grown-ups.

But, of course those of us who understand life make fun of numbers. I would have liked to start this story by beginning with fairy tales. I would have liked to say:

“Once upon a time there was a little prince who inhabited a planet that was hardly bigger than he, and he had needed a friend…” For those that understand life it would appear much more sincere.

I don’t want my book to be read lightly. It makes me sad to talk about these memories! It’s been six years that my friend left with his lamb. If I intend to write it down it’s just so that I don’t forget him. It’s sad to forget a friend. Not everyone has friends.



I could become like the grown-ups, who are only interested in numbers. This is why I bought pencils and a box of paints so that I could make new art that related more to those of my age. It is hard drawing again at my age when all I have drawn is boas from the outside and a boa from the inside when I was six years old. I would try of course to make portraits as similar to the real thing as possible, although I am not very sure how to achieve that. One picture will look alright, but the next doesn’t at all. I have also mistaken the size. Here the little prince appears very big, but in reality, he is very small. I hesitate about which color to use for his suit. So, for better or for worse, I try here and I try there. I make mistakes but at the end of the day, the more important thing is to forgive myself. After all, my friend didn’t give any explanations. I believe that perhaps he thought I was like him. But I unfortunately can’t see a lamb through a box. Perhaps I am like the grown-ups. I must have aged.

**V**

Every day I learned something new about the planet, about the departure, about the trip. Eventually everything became clear over time. It went like that until the third day when I learned about the disaster of the baobabs.

That time was because of the lamb. As if struck by an attack of grave doubt, the little prince interrogated me.

“Is it true sheep eat shrub?”

“Yes, it’s true”

“Ah! That makes me happy.”

I didn’t understand why it had been so important that sheep ate shrub. The little prince added: “Then how do they eat baobabs?”

I explained to the little prince that the baobabs are not shrubs, but trees that are as big as churches, so big that not even a herd of elephants can reach a baobab.

The idea of the herd of elephants made the prince laugh. “You would have to put one elephants on top of each other…”

And, he wisely observed: “Before the baobabs grow they start by being small.”

-Exactly! But, you want your lamb to eat the baby baobabs? He responded, “Certainly!” As if this was obvious. I had to make a grand effort of intelligence to understand the problem myself.

Indeed, on the little prince’s planet, as on all planets, there can be good plants and bad plants, but the seeds are invisible. They remain dormant in the depth of the land, until one of them happens to decide to desert it. Then, it awakens, and at first timidly in the direction of the sun, sprouts an enchanting, harmless twig. If it were a little bud of a little radish or of a rose bush, then it would be left to grow in peace, but if it was a bad plant, it would immediately be pulled out from the root, as soon as it was recognized as one. And in the planet of the little prince there had been terrible seeds…there were seeds of baobabs. The land of the planet was infested with them. And if a baobab wasn’t uprooted in time it is impossible to get rid of it, and it invades the entire planet. It digs with its roots, and if the planet is very small and the baobabs numerous, the planet will explode.



“It’s an issue of discipline” the little prince said to me later. “After washing up in the morning, we must dedicate ourselves to clean the planet carefully. We are obligated to regularly pull the roots of the baobabs among the rose bushes, which are easily confused when you’re young. It’s a very boring and tedious task, but it’s easy.

One day he advised me to try and make a lovely painting that would impress the children where I lived. “If some day they travel,” he said to me, “it will help them.” Sometimes it is convenient to put off work for later, but with the case of the baobabs, it can be a catastrophe to put off the work. “I knew of a planet that lived in danger because they neglected only three shrubs…”

So, using the descriptions from the little prince, I drew the planet. I don’t want to sound like a moralist, but the danger that the baobabs represent is so unknown, and the risks for people so grave, that by some time, I am frank when saying: “Kids, be careful of the baobabs!” I worked a lot on this picture to show my friends this unknown danger. It was worth it to take in to account the lesson I gave. Perhaps you may ask, “Why aren’t there other pictures in this book that are as detailed as the baobabs?” The answer is simple, I tried, but they were unsuccessful. On the other hand, I was motivated by an intense urgency to draw the baobabs and spread the word.

**VI**

Ah, little prince! So I am beginning to understand bit by bit your little melancholy life. Your only distraction for a long time was the sweetness of dusk. I entered this new detail the morning of the fourth day, when you said to me:

“I like the sunsets a lot. Let’s go watch the sunset…”

“But we have to wait”

“Wait for what?”

“…for the sun to go down.”

Again you were surprised, you then laughed and at the same time told me:

“I always think I am home!”

Of course, everyone knows that when in France and the sun is set, in the United States it is midday. We would have to get to France in only a minute to present the sunset. Unfortunately, France is very far. However, on your little planet, it would be enough to move your seat a couple of feet to be able to gaze at the twilight anytime you want…

“One day, I saw the sun set forty three times!”

A bit after you added:

“You know, when you’re terribly sad, you enjoy sunsets the most…”

“The day of the forty three sunsets, were you really sad?” I asked.

The little prince didn’t respond.

**VII**

The fifth day, another time thanks to the lamb, the secret of the life of the little prince was revealed to me. Suddenly and without introduction, as if it were a problem largely meditated in silence. He asked me:

“If a lamb eats shrubs, do they also eat flowers?”

-“a lamb will eat anything it finds.”

“Even the flowers that have thorns?”

“Yes, even the flowers that have thorns.”

-“Good, and what are the thorns good for?”

I didn’t know. In this moment I found myself very busy trying to unscrew a bolt too tight in my motor. I had been very worried, the breakdown began to appear to me to be a very grave situation, and the fact that the drinking water was running out made me fear the worst.

“What are the thorns good for?”

The little prince didn’t give up on the questions he had. I felt irritated because of the bolts, so I vaguely responded.

-“The thorns aren’t good for anything; they are pure evil from the flowers.”

-“Oh!”

But after a moment of silence,

-“I don’t think so, the flowers are weak and fragile and protect what they can, they are said to be reckless with their thorns…”

I was left silenced. In this moment I said: “if this bolt continues resisting, I will hit it with the heavy blow of a hammer.” The little prince interrupted my reflections again:

-“What about you? Do you think the flowers…?”

-“No! No! I don’t think anything, I answered you already. I’m busy with more serious problems!”

He looked at me stunned.

-“Serious problems!”

He looked at me with the hammer in my hand and my fingers black with oil, worried about an object that seemed very pointless.

-“You talk like a grown-up!”

I felt a little ashamed. Mercilessly he added:

-“You confuse everything…you mix up everything!”

The little prince was truly irritated; the wind agitated him and messed up his blonde hair.

“I know the planet where Sir Crimson lives. He has never smelled a flower. He has never contemplated the stars. He has never loved someone. He hasn’t done a lot like you. All day he repeats: “I am a serious man! I am a serious man!” This fills him with pride. This isn’t a man, this is a parasite.”

-A what?

-A parasite!

The little prince went pale with rage:

“For millions of years the flowers have had thorns. And for millions of years despite these thorns, the sheep eat the flowers. And, is it not important to try to understand why the flowers try so hard to create thorns if they don’t serve a purpose? Isn’t the war among the sheep and the flowers important? Aren’t the stories of a big shot parasite more important? (And how I know of a flower which is unique in the world and doesn’t exist in any other place except on my planet, and just one morning, without realizing what it was doing, a little lamb finished it with only one gulp, this isn’t important either?”) I can’t make this make sense in English ☹

Enraged, he added: (“If someone loves a flower which only exists on one planet, only one copy among the millions and millions of plants and planets, and it is enough to make him happy to just look at it and he tells himself: “My flower is out there somewhere, some place…” But if the lamb eats the flower, it’s as if suddenly the stars turn off for that person. This isn’t important either?”) This part too

I couldn’t say anything else. I suddenly burst into tears. The night had fallen. I had been left with my tools, but the hammer and the bolts weren’t important to me anymore, nor my thirst, or death. It had been there, on a star, a planet, that land, that a little prince needed to be comforted. I took him in my arms and cradled him and I said: “The flower that you love isn’t in danger…I will draw your sheep a muzzle and armor for your flower…I…” I didn’t know what else to say, I felt very awkward. I didn’t know how to reach him or bring him closer to me…it’s so mysterious, the place of sadness.

**VIII**

I soon learned a lot about this flower. On the little prince’s planet there were many simple flowers, decorated with a single row of petals that hardly took up any space and didn’t bother anyone. They appeared one morning among the grass, but at night they disappear. But this flower, however, had been contaminated one day buy a seed from an unknown place, and the little prince had been keeping an eye on these little buds that didn’t appear on the rest. It could have been a new type of baobab, but the shrub soon grew to be a flower. The little prince assisted in the formation of the bud, and he felt that because of him the flower would be miraculous, but her green body appeared to continuously embellish itself on her own. She carefully chose her own colors, dressing slowly and adjusting one petal at a time. She didn’t want to appear out of nowhere with all of the magnificence of her beauty. Oh yes! She was very flirtatious. Her mysterious embellishment had lasted days and days. And it was that morning just at dawn, when she revealed herself.

And the flower, having worked hard on herself and with such precision, said yawning:

“Ah! I just woke up…pardon me. I am still unkempt.”

The little prince couldn’t contain his admiration:

“How lovely you are!”

“Really?” The flower said sweetly. I was born at the same time as the sun…

The little prince realized straightaway that the flower was very modest, but so charming.

“I think it’s time for breakfast”-the flower added immediately- “Would you Sir have the goodness to care for me…?”

And the little prince, completely abashed, went to search for a watering can with fresh water to give to the flower.

But soon the little prince was tormented by her demanding manner. One day for example, talking about her four thorns, the flower said:

“Now the tigers can come with their claws!”

“There aren’t tigers on my planet”-the little prince objected. “Besides, tigers don’t eat plants.”

“I am no plant”-responded the rose sweetly.

-“Pardon me…”

-“I don’t fear tigers, but the currents of the wind horrify me. Do you by any chance have a screen?”

“Horrified by the current of the wind…how unlucky for a plant”-observed the prince-This flower is quite complicated…

“During the night I would like you to put me in a crystal dome. Here it’s very cold. There is no way to be comfortable. But, where I’m from…”

But she stopped herself. She had come in the form of a seed and couldn’t possibly know anything about other worlds. Humiliated to have been caught in in such an elaborate naïve lie, she coughed a couple of times to change the subject. “So where is the screen?”

“I was going to get it but you kept talking to me!”

Then, the flower coughed to make the little prince feel remorseful.

So, the little prince, in spite of the goodwill of his love for the flower, began to doubt her. He had been taking her unimportant words seriously and felt very unhappy.

“I shouldn’t have listened to her.” He confided in me one day. “Never listen to flowers.” We can only gaze at them and inhale their aroma. Mine had perfumed my planet, but she didn’t know how to appreciate me. The story of the claws had annoyed me so much but it should have touched my heart…”

And then he confided to me:

“Back then I didn’t understand anything. I should have judged her by her actions and not by her words. She had casted her fragrance and her radiance over me. I should have never left her! I should have seen the affection hidden behind her poor little tricks. Flowers are such contradictions! But I had been too young to know how to love her.”