LIBRIS | We know books

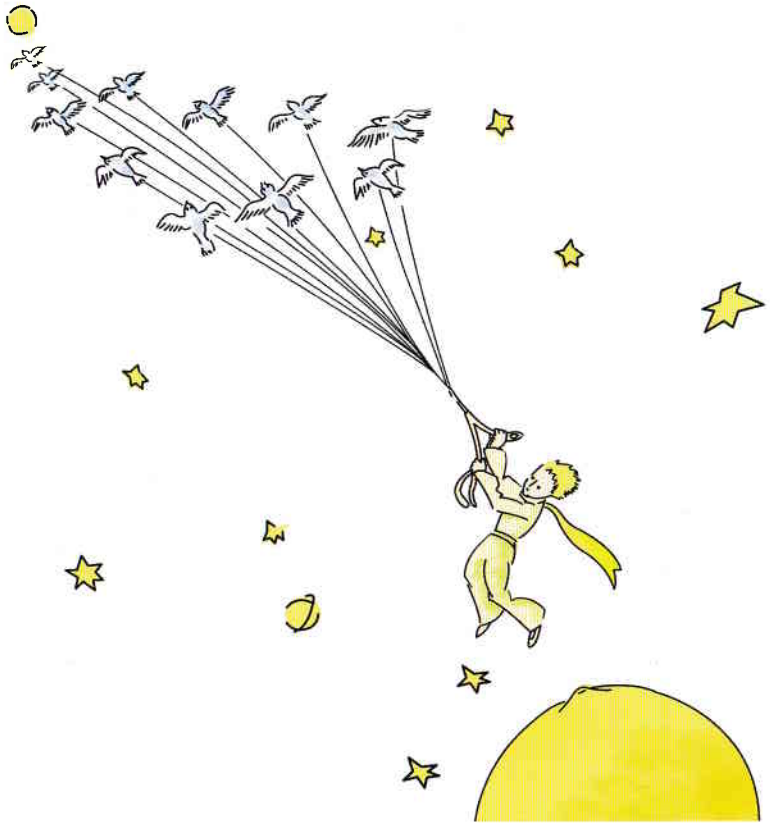
# The Little Prince

## Antoine de Saint-Exupéry



Classic Editions

LIBRIS | We know books

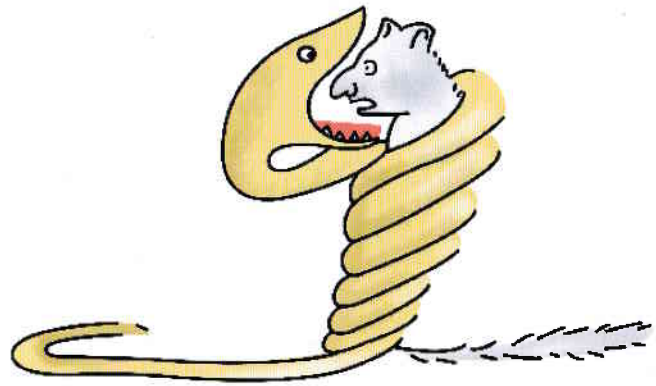


'I believe that for his escape he took advantage of the migration of a flock of wild birds.'

# CHAPTER ONE

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 in the act of swallowing an animal.

Here is a copy of the drawing.

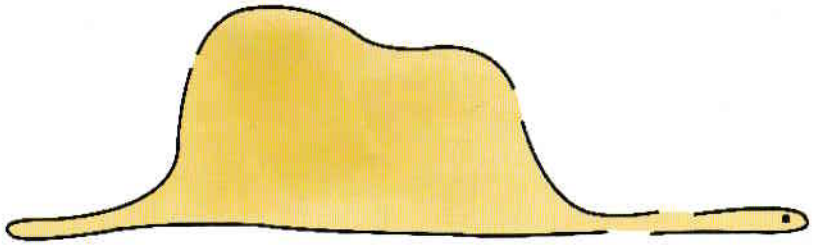


In the book it said: 'Boa constrictors swallow their prey whole, without chewing. After that they are not able to move, and they sleep for six months to digest the meal.'

* The forest which has never been cut down and never felt an ax.

LIBRIS We know books

I then pondered deeply over the adventures in the jungle. And after some work with a coloured pencil I succeeded in making my first drawing. My drawing Number One was like this:



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

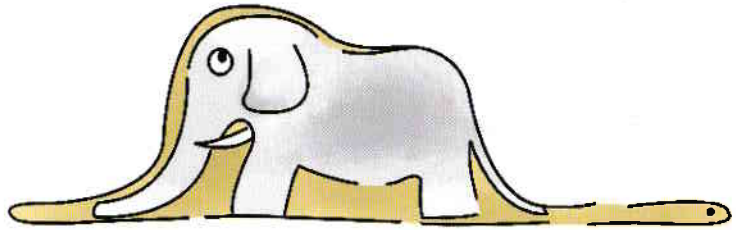
But they answered: "Frighten? Why should anyone be frightened by a hat?"

My drawing was not a picture of a hat. It was a picture of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. But since the grown-ups were not able to understand it, I made another drawing.

I now drew the inside of the boa constrictor. The grown-ups always need to have things



explained to them. My new drawing showing the elephant inside the boa constrictor 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 to devote myself instead to geography, history, arithmetic and grammar. That is why, at the age of six, I gave up 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 always explain things to them.

So then I chose another profession, and I learned to pilot aeroplanes. I have flown almost all over the world; and it is true that geography has been very useful to me. I can, at a glance, distinguish between China and Arizona. If one gets lost in the night, such knowledge is valuable.

LIBRIS We know books

Throughout my life, I have been in touch with many kinds of serious people. I have lived a great deal with grown-ups. I have seen them intimately, close at hand. And that, I'm afraid, hasn't much improved my opinion of them.

Whenever I met one of them who seemed to me at all clear-sighted, I tried the experiment of showing him my drawing Number One, which I have always kept at hand. I would try to find out whether the person was truly understanding. But the answer was always:

"That is a hat."

Then I would never talk to that person about boa constrictors or primeval forests or stars. I would bring myself down to his level and talk about bridge, golf, politics and neckties. And the grown-up would be greatly pleased to have met such a sensible person.



# CHAPTER TWO

So I LIVED my life alone, without anyone that I could really talk to, until I had an accident with my plane in the Sahara Desert six years ago. Something had broken down in my engine. And since there was no mechanic or any passenger with me, I decided to carry out the difficult repairs myself. It was a question of life or death for me. I had scarcely enough drinking water to last for a week.

The first night, then, I went to sleep on the sand, a thousand miles away from any human habitation. 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, completely thunderstruck. I blinked my eyes hard, and looked carefully around me. And I saw an extraordinary small boy who stood there

IBDIS We know books

watching me very seriously. Here you may see the best portrait that I was able to make of him later. But my drawing is not quite as charming as its model.

That, however, is not my fault. I had been discouraged by grown-ups 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 had crashed in the desert a thousand miles from any inhabited region. And yet my little man did not look like a child lost in the midst of the desert, nor to be fainting from fatigue or hunger or thirst or fear. When at last I managed to speak, I said to him:

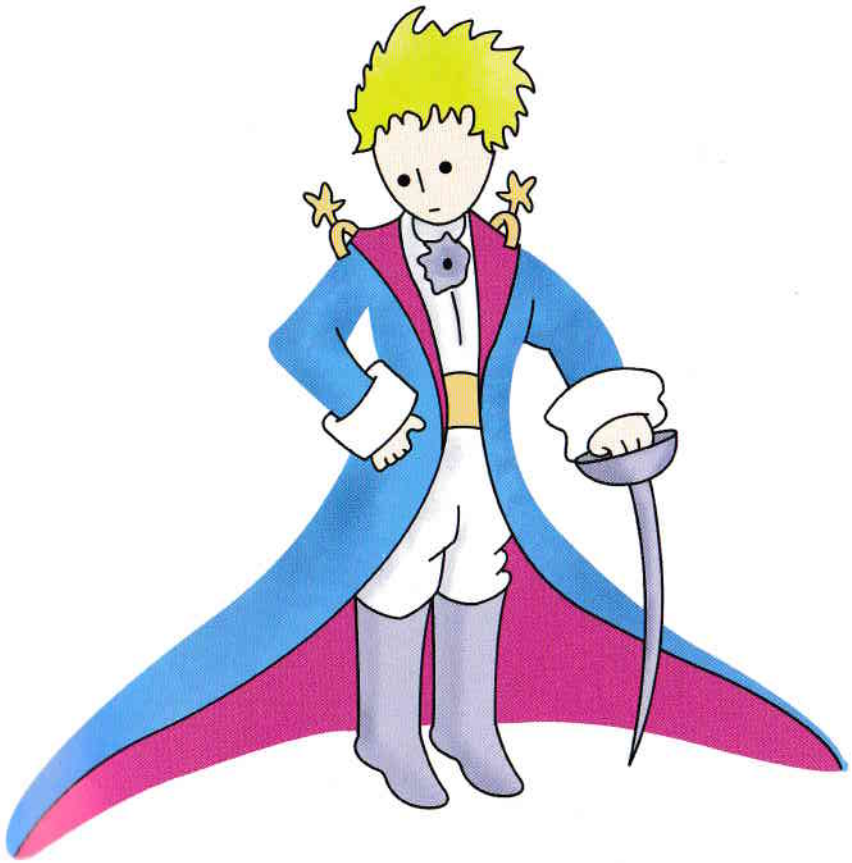
"But – what are you doing here?"

And in answer he repeated softly and slowly, as if he were speaking of a matter of great consequence:

"If you please – draw me a sheep"

When a mystery is too overpowering, 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 I suddenly remembered how my studies had been





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

LIBRIS We know books

concentrated on geography, history, arithmetic and grammar, and I told the little chap (a little crossly, too) that I did not know how to draw.

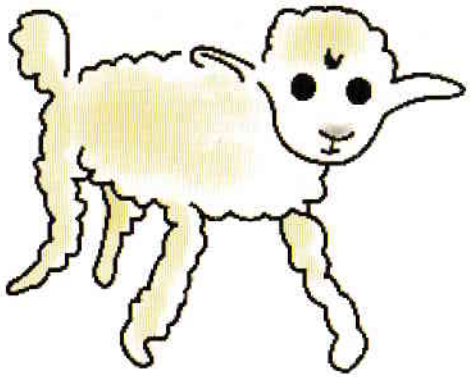
He answered:

"That doesn't matter. Please draw me a sheep – "

But I had never drawn a sheep before. So I drew for him one of the two pictures I had drawn so often. It was that of the boa constrictor from the outside. And I was quite astounded to hear the little fellow greet my hat-like picture with:

"No! no! no! I don't want an elephant inside a boa constrictor. A boa constrictor is a very dangerous creature, and an elephant is very cumbersome. Where I live, everything is very small. Draw me a sheep. Draw me a sheep."

So then I drew a sheep:

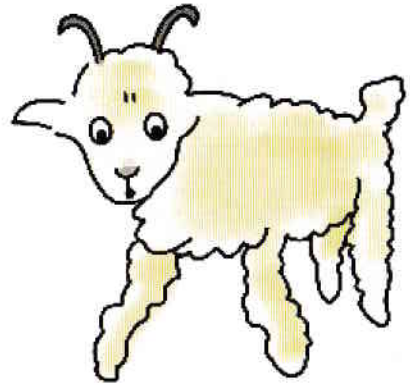




He looked at it carefully and said:

"No. This one is already very sickly. Make me another."

And I made another drawing:



My little friend smiled gently and indulgently:

"Don't you see that is not a sheep, it is a ram. It has horns – "

So I made another drawing:

