

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY



The Little Prince

with illustrations by the author

in a new English translation by Alan Wakeman



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I think he took advantage of migrating birds to make his escape

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FOR LEON WERTH

I hope all you children will forgive me for dedicating this book to a grown-up. I've got a good excuse: this grown-up is my best friend in the whole world. I've got another excuse: this grown-up understands everything, even children's books. I've got a third excuse: this grown-up lives in France and he's hungry and cold.* He really needs cheering up. If all these excuses aren't good enough, I don't mind dedicating this book to the child this grown-up used to be. All grown-ups used to be children once. (Though few of them remember it.) So I'll alter my dedication:

FOR LEON WERTH WHEN HE WAS A LITTLE BOY

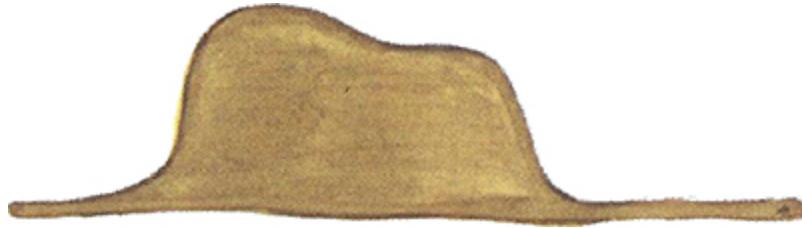
*Saint-Exupéry wrote *The Little Prince* in exile in the USA during the second world war while his beloved France was occupied by Nazi Germany.



Once when I was six I saw a magnificent picture in a book about the virgin rainforest called 'True Stories from Life'. It showed a bo-a constrictor swallowing a wild beast. Here is a copy of the picture.

In the book it said: 'Boa-constrictors swallow their prey whole, without chewing it. They can't move afterwards and sleep for six months while they digest it.'

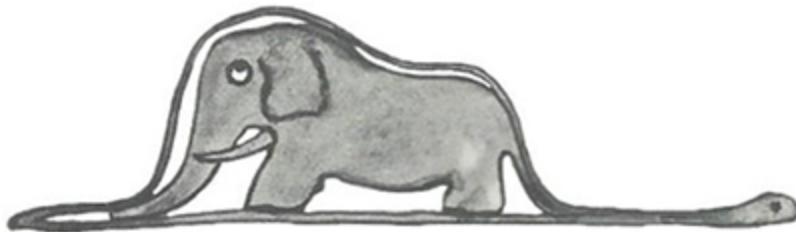
Well, this set me thinking about jungle adventures and I succeeded in doing my first drawing, using a coloured pencil. My Drawing Number 1. It was like this.



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

They said: 'Why should we be frightened of a hat?'

My drawing wasn't a hat. It was a bo-a constrictor digesting an elephant. So I did a drawing of the inside of the bo-a constrictor to help the grown-ups to understand. They always need explanations. My Drawing Number 2 was like this:



The grown-ups told me to put my drawings of open and closed boa-constrictors away and get on with my geography, history, arithmetic and grammar. And that's how I gave up a fantastic career as a painter at the age of six. I was depressed by the failure of Drawing Number 1 and of Drawing Number 2. Grown-ups never understand anything on their own and it's boring for children to keep having to explain things to them.

So I had to choose a different job and I learned how to fly planes instead. I've flown all over the world. And it's true that geography has been very useful. I can tell the difference between China and Arizona at a glance. This is very helpful if you get lost in the night.

In the course of this life I've had lots to do with lots of serious people. I've spent a lot of time with grown-ups. I've seen them from close up. It hasn't improved my opinion of them much.

Whenever I meet one who seems intelligent I get out my Drawing Number 1, which I've always kept, and try it out on him. The idea is to find out if he knows what he's talking about. But the person always says: 'It's a hat.' So I don't talk to him about boa-constrictors, or virgin rainforests, or stars. I do what he wants. I talk about bridge, golf, politics and ties. And the grown-up is really pleased to know such a sensible man.

II

This is why I lived alone, without anyone I could really talk to until six years ago when I had a break-down in the Sahara Desert.

Something had broken in my engine and as I didn't have a mechanic or any passengers with me I knew I'd have to try to do a difficult repair job all on my own. It was a matter of life and death. I had hardly enough drinking water to last me eight days.

There I was then, that first night, going to sleep on the sand a thousand miles from human habitation. I was more isolated than a castaway on a raft in the middle of the ocean. So you can imagine my amazement when I was woken at daybreak by a strange little voice saying:

‘Please... draw me a sheep!’

‘What?’

‘Draw me a sheep...’

I jumped to my feet as if I'd been struck by lightning. I rubbed my eyes. I looked. And I saw this extraordinary little chap looking at me intently.

But of course my picture's a lot less enchanting than the original. It's not my fault. I was put off a career as a painter by grown-ups at the age of six, and the only things I ever learned to draw were open and closed boa-constrictors. Anyway, I stood looking at this apparition, my eyes wide with astonishment. Don't forget I was a thousand miles from human habitation. Yet this little fellow didn't seem to be either lost, or tired, or hungry, or thirsty, or frightened. In no way did he look like a child lost in the middle of a desert a thousand miles from human habitation. When I finally managed to speak, I said:

‘What on earth are you doing here?’

And he repeated, very gently, as if it was very important:

‘Please... draw me a sheep!’

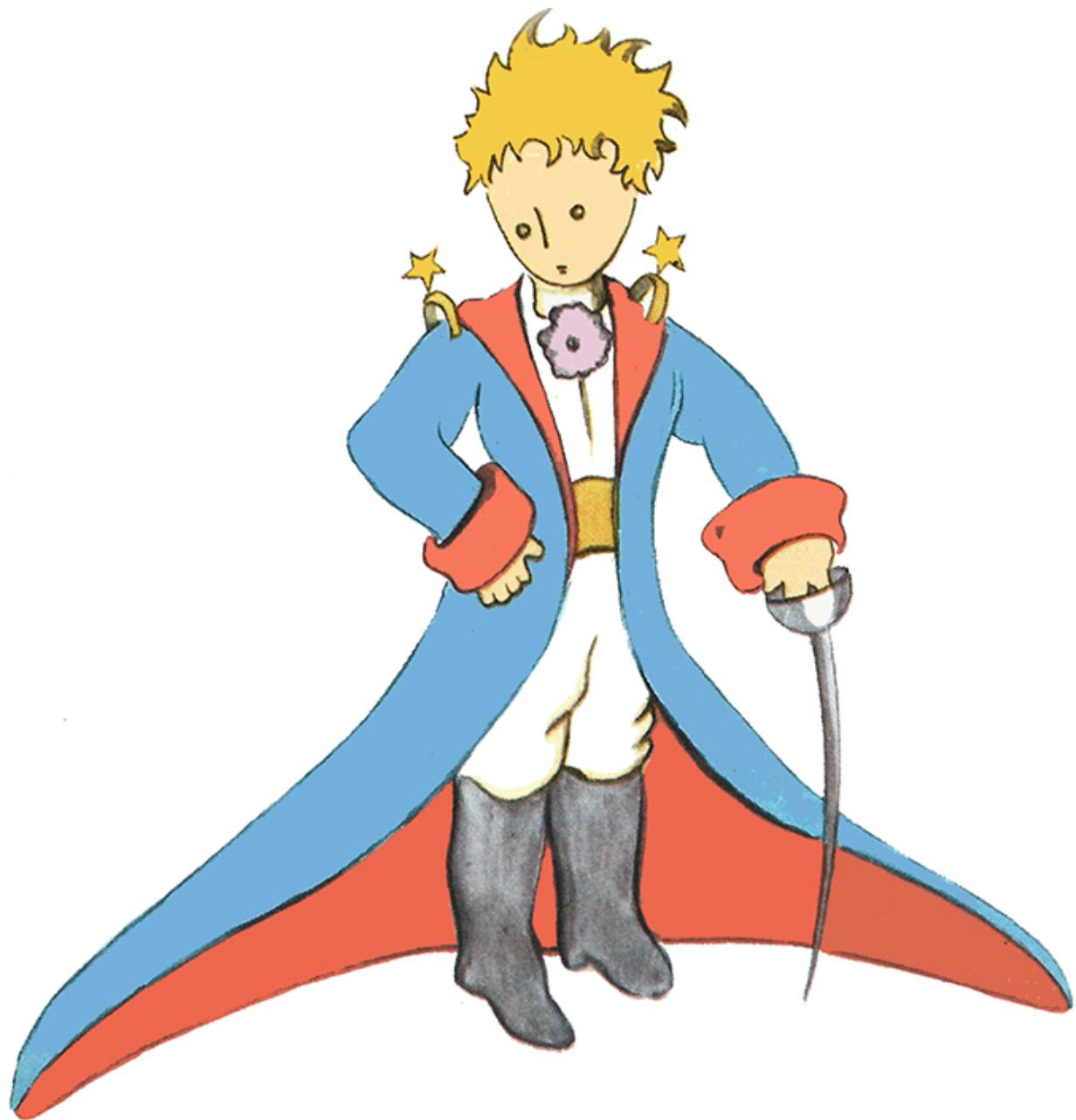
When a mystery is so overpowering, one dare not disobey. As absurd as it seemed to me a thousand miles from human habitation and in danger of death, I got a sheet of paper and a pen out of my pocket. But then I remembered that I had chiefly studied geography, history, arithmetic and

grammar and I said to the little chap (rather crossly) that I didn't know how to draw. He replied:

'It doesn't matter. Draw me a sheep!'

As I had never drawn a sheep I re-did for him one of the only two drawings I knew. The one of the closed boa-constrictor. And I was astounded to hear him say:

'No, no! I don't want an elephant in a boa-constrictor. A boa-constrictor's very dangerous, and an elephant's very cumbersome. It's very small where I come from. I need a sheep. Draw me a sheep!'



Here's the best portrait I was able to do of him later.

So I did a drawing.



He looked at it carefully, then said: 'No. That one's already very ill. Do me another.'

So I did another.

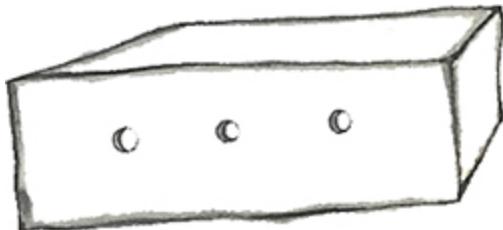


My friend smiled benevolently and said gently:
'Come, come, you can see it isn't a sheep. It's a ram. It's got horns,'
So I did another drawing, but it was rejected like the previous ones.



'That one's too old. I want a sheep that'll live a long time.'

Finally, as I was getting impatient and was in a hurry to start stripping down my engine, I scribbled this drawing and flung it at him: 'That's the box. The sheep you want's inside.'



And I was amazed to see my young judge's face light up.

'That's exactly what I wanted! Do you think this sheep needs much grass?'

'Why?'

'Because it's very small where I come from.'

'He'll be just right. I've drawn you a very small sheep.'

He leaned over the drawing.

'Not so small as all that. Hello... he's fallen asleep!'

And that's how I came to meet the little prince.

III

It took me a long time to discover where he came from. Although the little prince asked me lots of questions, he never seemed to hear mine. It was things he said by chance that, bit by bit, revealed the truth to me. For example, when he first saw my plane (I won't try to draw my plane – that would be too hard for me) he said:

‘What’s that thing?’

‘It’s not a thing. It flies. It’s a plane. It’s my plane.’

And I was proud to reveal I could fly.

Then he cried out:

‘What? You fell from the sky!’

‘Yes,’ I said modestly.

‘How funny!’

And the little prince burst out laughing, which annoyed me a lot. I expect people to take my misfortunes seriously.

Then he added:

‘So you came from the sky too! Which planet are you from?’



I suddenly had an idea where he might have appeared from so mysteriously and quickly asked: 'So you're from another planet, are you?'

But he didn't reply. Looking at my plane, he gently shook his head.

'You obviously couldn't have come very far in that thing, could you?' And he sank into a sort of daydream for a long time. Then he got my sheep out of his pocket and gazed thoughtfully at his treasure.

You can imagine how intrigued I was by this semirevelation about 'another planet'. So I tried to find out more:

‘Where are you from, young fellow? Where’s your home? Where are you going to take my sheep?’

After a thoughtful silence he replied: ‘What’s really good about the box you’ve given me is that at night he’ll be able to use it as a house.’

‘Of course. And if you’re good I’ll give you a rope to tie him up with in the daytime. And a stake.’

The idea seemed to shock the little prince:

‘Tie him up! What a funny idea!’

‘But if you don’t, he’ll wander about all over the place and get lost.’



The little prince on asteroid B 612.

My little friend burst out laughing again:
‘Where do you think he could go?’
‘Anywhere. Straight ahead.’

Then the little prince said gravely:
‘It wouldn’t matter. It’s so small where I come from.’ And with perhaps a touch of sadness he added:
‘Even straight ahead, he couldn’t get very far.’

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IV

So that was how I discovered a second important thing: that the planet he came from was scarcely bigger than a house!

This didn't particularly surprise me. I knew that, apart from the big planets which have been given names: like Earth, Jupiter, Mars and Venus, there are hundreds of others, some of which are so tiny you can hardly see them through a telescope. When an astronomer discovers one he gives it a number for a name. For example, he might call it Asteroid 3251.



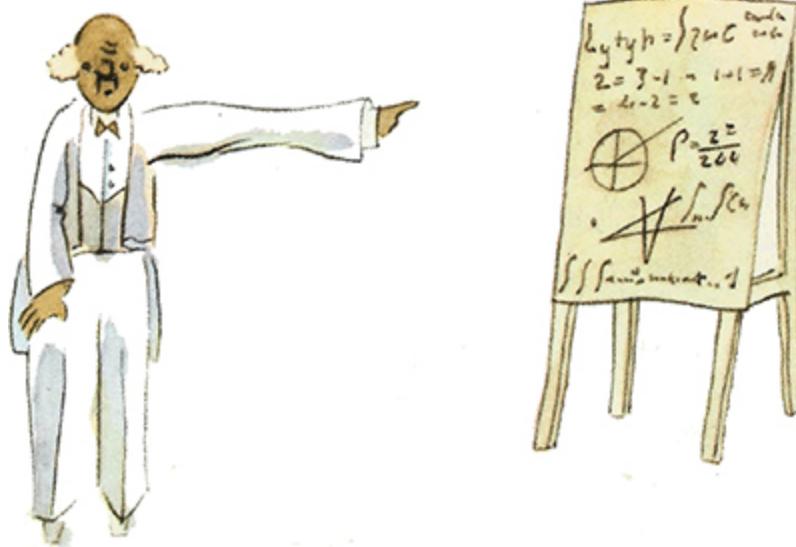
I have good reasons for thinking that the planet the little prince came from is Asteroid B 612. This asteroid has only been seen once through a

telescope, by a Turkish astronomer, in 1909.



He gave a lecture about his discovery at an International Congress of Astronomy at the time, but no one believed him because of the clothes he was wearing. Grown-ups are like that.

Luckily for the reputation of Asteroid B 612, a Turkish dictator forced his people to wear European clothes on penalty of death. The astronomer gave his lecture again in 1920 dressed in a smart suit. And this time everyone believed him.



I've given all these details about Asteroid B 612, including its number, for the benefit of grown-ups. Grown-ups like numbers. When you talk to them about a new friend, they never want to know about the important things. They never say: 'What's his voice like? What are his favourite games? Does he collect butterflies?' They ask: 'How old is he? How many brothers has he got? How much does he weigh? How much does his father earn?' And they imagine this will help them to find out what he's like! If you say to grown-ups:

'I once saw a lovely pink brick house, with geraniums in the windows and doves on the roof.' they'll never manage to visualize it. You have to say: 'I once saw a hundred-thousand-franc house.'

Then they'll all cry: 'How pretty!'

So if you say: 'The proof that the little prince existed is that he was delightful, that he laughed and wanted a sheep. When you want a sheep, that's proof that you exist,' they'll shrug their shoulders and treat you like a child. But if you say: 'The planet he came from is Asteroid B 612,' they'll be convinced and will leave you alone with their questions.

They're like that. You mustn't get cross with them. Children must be very tolerant towards grown-ups.

But, of course, those of us who understand life don't give a fig about numbers! I would have liked to have begun this story like a fairy tale. I would have liked to have said:

'Once Upon a Time there was a little prince who lived on a planet hardly bigger than he was, and who needed a friend.' For those who understand such things it would have seemed a lot more true to life.

For I don't want this book taken lightly. It's very painful for me to recall these events. It's already six years since my friend went away with his sheep. The reason I'm trying to describe him here is so that I won't forget him. It's sad to forget a friend. Not everyone's had a friend. And then I might become like grown-ups... only interested in numbers. That's why I've bought pencils and a paint-box. It's hard to start drawing again at my age when the only attempts I've ever made have been open and closed boa-constrictors at the age of six. Of course I'll try to get the best likeness I can. But I'm not sure I'll succeed. One drawing works, another doesn't. I may get the size a bit wrong. Here the little prince is too big, there he's too small. I'm also unsure about the colour of his clothes. So I guess this and

that, as best I can. In the end I may get some important details wrong. You must forgive me. My friend never explained anything. Perhaps he thought I was like him. But unfortunately I can't see sheep through boxes. Perhaps I'm a bit like grown-ups. I must be getting old.

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V

Every day I discovered something else about his planet, or his departure, or his journey. It came gradually, by chance remarks. Thus, on the third day, I heard about the problem of the baobabs.

This time too it was thanks to the sheep because the little prince seemed suddenly struck with doubt and demanded sharply:

‘Sheep do eat bushes, don’t they?’

‘Yes, they do.’

‘Oh good.’

I didn’t understand why it was so important that sheep should eat bushes. But the little prince added:

‘So obviously they eat baobabs too, don’t they?’

I remarked to the little prince that baobabs are hardly bushes, but enormous trees as big as a church, and that even if he took a whole herd of elephants with him they’d hardly manage to finish a single baobab.

The idea of the herd of elephants made the little prince laugh:

‘You’d have to pile them on top of one another!’

But then he remarked wisely:

‘Before they get big, baobabs start out small.’

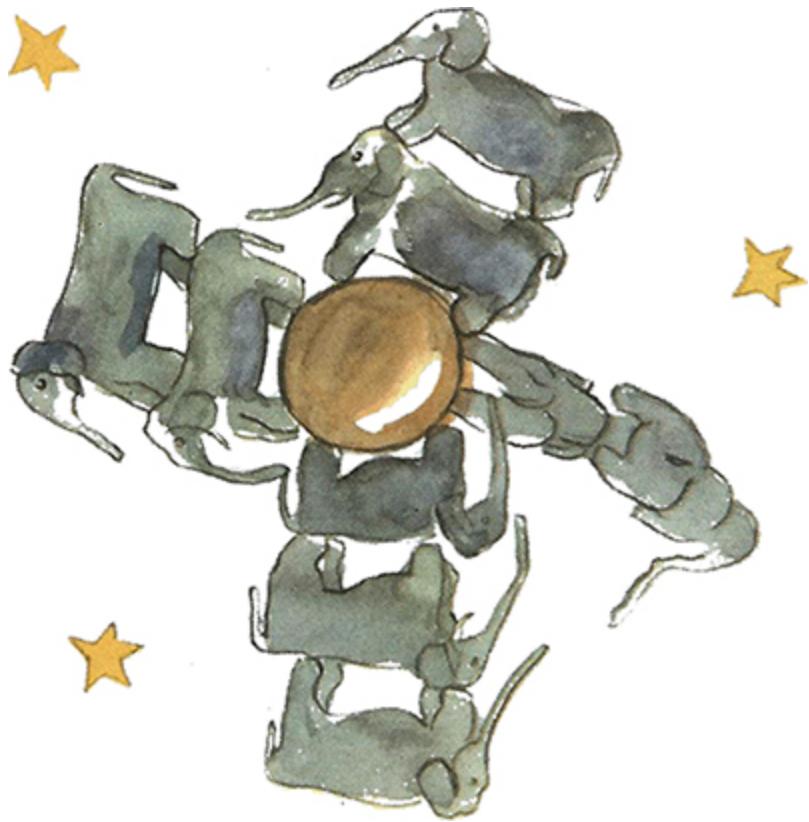
‘That’s true. But why do you want your sheep to eat small baobabs?’

‘Well,’ he said, as if he had to explain something obvious and I needed a big effort of concentration to understand the problem all on my own, ‘Let’s see...’

And, in fact, on the little prince’s planet, as on all planets, there were both useful plants and weeds. Therefore plant seeds and weed seeds. But seeds are invisible. They sleep secretly underground till one of them takes it into its head to wake up.

Whereupon it has a stretch and, timidly at first, begins sending out a pretty, harmless little shoot towards the sun. If it’s a radish or rosebush shoot it can be left to grow how it likes. But if it’s a weed it has to be pulled out directly, just as soon as you can recognize it. Well, on the little prince’s planet there were some horrible seeds: baobab seeds! The soil of the planet

was thick with them. Now it's impossible to get rid of a baobab once it's taken hold. It takes over the whole planet. It drills through the soil with its roots. And if the planet is too small and there are too many baobabs, they can burst it apart.





'It's a matter of self-discipline,' the little prince said to me later.

'After my morning wash, I must carefully do the planet's morning wash... by pulling out every single baobab shoot, just as soon as I can tell the difference between them and the rosebushes, which they're very similar to when young. It's boring work, but very easy.'

And one day he advised me to try very hard to do a beautiful picture to help earth children to understand all this. 'If they ever travel it might be useful,' he said. 'It's sometimes all right to put off doing a job till later, but with baobabs it's always a disaster. I once knew a planet where a lazybones lived. He couldn't be bothered with three little bushes... '

And, following the prince's instructions, I did this picture of the lazybones's planet. Now I don't want to preach, but the danger of baobabs is so little known and the risks for someone who goes wandering off to an

asteroid are so enormous that, for once, I'll overcome my reluctance and say it right out: 'Children! Be careful of baobabs!' I worked really hard on this picture so I could warn my friends of a danger that, like me, they've been up against for a long time without realizing it. The lesson in the picture made it worth the trouble. You may wonder why there aren't any other impressive pictures in the book like this one of the baobabs. The answer's easy: I tried but didn't succeed. When I was drawing the baobabs I was inspired by a sense of urgency.



The baobabs

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VI

Ah, little prince... so, bit by bit, I came to understand your melancholy little life. For a long while your sole amusement was the pleasure of sunsets. I discovered this new detail on the fourth morning when you said:

‘I like sunsets. Let’s go and watch a sunset...’

‘But we must wait.’

‘What for?’

‘For the sun to set. At first you seemed surprised. Then you laughed at yourself and said: ‘I keep thinking I’m at home!’

And in fact, as everybody knows, when it’s midday in America, the sun’s setting in France. If you could get to France in a minute you could see a sunset. Unfortunately, France is a lot too far away. But on your little planet, all you had to do was pull your chair back a few paces and you could watch the dusk anytime you liked.

‘One day I watched the sun set forty-three times!’

And a bit later you added:

‘You know... when you’re feeling really sad, you like sunsets...’

‘Were you feeling so sad then, that day you watched forty-three sunsets?’

But the little prince didn’t reply.

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VII

On the fifth day I discovered another secret of the little prince's life, once again thanks to the sheep. Without warning, as if he'd been turning it over quietly in his mind for a long time, he suddenly said:

'Do sheep eat flowers, as well as bushes?'

'Sheep eat everything they find.'

'Even flowers with thorns?'

'Yes. Even flowers with thorns.'

'So what's the point of thorns then?'

I didn't know. I was in the middle of trying to undo a jammed bolt in my engine. My break-down was beginning to look serious and as my drinking water was running out I was beginning to fear the worst.

'So what's the point of thorns then?'

The little prince never gave up a question once he'd asked it. I was angry with the bolt and snapped back without thinking:

'Thorns are pointless; they're just a flower's way of being spiteful!'

'Oh!'

But after a silence he said bitterly:

'I don't believe you. Flowers are weak and simple. They fend for themselves as best they can. They think they're terrifying with their thorns.'

I didn't reply. At that moment I was thinking: 'If this bolt resists one second longer, I'll smash it to bits with a hammer.' The little prince interrupted my thoughts again:

'So you think that flowers... '

'No, no, no! I don't think any such thing! I said the first thing that came into my head. Can't you see I'm busy with something serious?'

He stared at me, stunned.

'Something serious!'

He saw me, hammer in hand, my fingers black with grease, bent over what seemed to him a very ugly object.

'You sound like a grown-up!'

That made me a bit ashamed. But he added pitilessly:

‘You get everything wrong... you get everything mixed up!’

He was really cross. He shook his golden hair in the wind:

‘I know a planet where there’s a man with a bright red face. He’s never smelt a flower. He’s never looked at a star. He’s never loved anyone. He’s never done anything but sums. And all day long he says, like you: “I’m serious, I am! I’m a serious man!” and he swells with pride. But he’s not a man, he’s a mushroom!’

‘A what?’

‘A mushroom.’

The little prince was now white with anger.

‘For millions of years flowers have been making thorns. And for millions of years sheep have been eating them just the same. And you don’t think it’s serious to try and understand why flowers take so much trouble making useless thorns! You don’t think it’s serious, the war between sheep and flowers! You don’t think it’s as serious and important as a fat, red-faced man’s sums!

And suppose I know a flower, the only one in the whole world, that doesn’t exist anywhere except on my planet, that a little sheep could gobble up just like that, one morning, without realising what he was doing... you don’t think that’s important!’



He blushed, then went on:

'If someone loves a flower who's unique among all the millions and millions of stars, that's enough to make him happy when he looks at them. He can think to himself: "My flower's out there somewhere." But if a sheep ate the flower, for him it would be as if all the stars had suddenly gone out. And you don't think that's important!'

He couldn't go on. He suddenly burst into tears. Night had come on. I'd dropped my tools. I didn't give a fig for my hammer, the bolt, hunger or thirst.

There, on my star, on my planet, on Earth, was a little prince in need of comforting. I took him in my arms. I rocked him. I said: ‘The flower you love isn’t in danger. I’ll draw a muzzle for your sheep. I’ll draw a railing for your flower... I...’ I didn’t really know what to say. I felt so clumsy. I didn’t know how to reach him, to get back in touch with him. The land of tears is so mysterious.

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VIII

I soon got to know this flower better. There had always been very simple flowers on the little prince's planet, decorated with a single row of petals. They took up no room and didn't get in anyone's way. They would appear among the grass in the morning and disappear by the evening. But this particular one had germinated one day from a seed brought from heaven knows where and the little prince had watched it closely because it was different from any shoot he'd ever seen before. It might have been a new kind of baobab. But the seedling soon stopped growing and began preparing a flower. The little prince saw an enormous bud swelling and realised that a marvellous apparition would soon emerge. But the flower went on preparing her beauty in the shelter of her green chamber. Choosing her colours with care, she dressed slowly, arranging her petals one by one. She didn't want to come out all crinkled, like a poppy. She wanted to appear only in the full bloom of her beauty. Ah yes, she was a coquette! So she spent days and days getting ready. And then, one morning, exactly at daybreak, she finally came out of her hiding-place. And after working so long and so carefully, do you know what she said, stifling a yawn?

‘Ah! I’m still half asleep and haven’t had time to do my hair...’

The little prince could hardly contain his admiration:

‘How beautiful you are!’

‘Yes, aren’t I?’ said the flower, ‘and I was born at the same time as the sun...’

The little prince realised this wasn’t exactly modest, but she was so exciting!

‘I believe it’s breakfast time,’ she said. I wonder if you’ll be kind enough to think of me.’



So the little prince went off, all abashed, to fetch her a canful of fresh water.

Thus you can see how soon she started making his life difficult with her stormy vanity. One day, for instance, she said to the little prince:



'I'm not afraid of tigers, with their claws!'

'There aren't any tigers on my planet,' objected the little prince...
'Besides, tigers don't eat grass.'

'I'm not grass,' replied the flower sweetly.

'I beg your pardon.'

'I'm not afraid of tigers, but I can't stand draughts. Would you by any chance have a windshield?'

'It's hard luck for a plant not to be able to stand draughts,' the little prince thought to himself. 'She's very complicated for a flower.'

'I must be put under glass at night. It's very cold here. It's not at all well-organised. Now where I come from...'

But she had to stop. She had come as a seed and couldn't know anything about other places. Embarrassed at being caught out to tell such a silly lie, she coughed a few times to put the little prince in the wrong and said:



'So what about this windshield?'
'I was going to get it, but you were still speaking!'



So she forced her cough even more to make him ashamed.

Thus, despite his well-meaning love for her, the little prince soon came to mistrust her. He took her careless remarks seriously and became very unhappy.

'I shouldn't have listened to her,' he told me one day. 'One should never listen to flowers. One should look at them and smell them. Mine perfumed my whole planet, but I didn't know how to enjoy it. This story of claws, which irritated me so much, should have filled me with tenderness.'

And he confided in me:

'I understood nothing then! I should have judged her by her actions, not her words. She perfumed and lit up my life. I never should have run away! I should have guessed the tenderness behind her silly games. Flowers are so contrary. But I was too young to know how to love her.'



IX

I think he took advantage of migrating birds to make his escape. The morning before he left he tidied up his planet. He carefully raked out the active volcanoes. He had two active volcanoes... and very useful they were for making breakfast! He also had an extinct volcano. But as the little prince said: ‘You never know!’ So he raked out the extinct volcano too, just in case. Volcanoes burn gently and regularly if they’re properly raked out, and don’t erupt. Volcanic eruptions are like chimney fires. Obviously on earth we’re very much too small to rake out our volcanoes.

Which is why they give us so much trouble. With some sadness, the little prince also pulled out the latest crop of baobab shoots. He thought he would never return and all these routine tasks seemed very pleasant to him that morning. And when he watered the flower for the last time and was about to cover her again, he suddenly felt like crying.

‘Goodbye,’ he said to the flower.

But she didn’t reply.

‘Goodbye,’ he said again.

The flower coughed. But it wasn’t because of her cold. ‘I’ve been silly,’ she said at last. ‘I’m sorry. Try and be happy.’

He was surprised she didn’t blame him. He stood there, confused, holding the glass globe. He didn’t understand this calm mood of hers.



He carefully raked out the active volcanoes.

‘Yes, it’s true. I love you.’ she said to him. ‘It’s my fault you didn’t realize it. It doesn’t matter. But you were as silly as me. Try and be happy. Put that globe away. I don’t need it anymore.’

‘But what about the wind?’

‘My cold isn’t so bad really... The cool night air will do me good. I’m a flower.’

‘But what about wild beasts?’

‘I must put up with a few caterpillars, mustn’t I, if I want to see butterflies? I hear they’re so beautiful. Besides, who else will come to see me? You’ll be far away. As for big animals, they don’t frighten me. I’ve got my claws...’ And naively, she displayed her four thorns. Then she said:

Don’t hang around like that. It’s irritating. If you’re going to go, go!’

For she didn’t want him to see her crying. She was such a proud flower.

X

He found himself in an asteroid zone... numbers 325, 326, 327, 328, 329 and 330. So he began by visiting them... for something to do and to improve his education.

A king lived on the first. He was dressed in purple and ermine and seated on a simple but majestic throne.

‘Ah! A subject!’ cried the king when he saw the little prince.

‘How can he recognize me when he’s never seen me before?’ thought the little prince to himself.

He didn’t know that the world is very simple for kings. *Everyone* is a subject.

‘Approach, so that I might see you better,’ the king said to him, proud to be a king for someone.

The little prince glanced round for somewhere to sit, but the whole planet was taken up with the magnificent ermine cloak. So he remained standing up and, because he was tired, he yawned.

‘It’s contrary to etiquette to yawn in the presence of a king,’ the monarch said. ‘I forbid it.’

The little prince was thrown into confusion. ‘I can’t stop myself,’ he said. ‘I’ve come a long way and haven’t slept.’

‘Very well,’ said the king ‘then I *command* you to yawn. I haven’t seen anyone yawn for years. Yawns are an unusual sight for me. Come along then, yawn again! That’s an order.’

‘Now you’ve put me off,’ said the little prince, blushing, ‘and I can’t anymore.’

‘Humph! Well then,’ replied the king, ‘I... I... command you to yawn sometimes and sometimes to... erm...’

He stammered and seemed angry.

For the king insisted that his authority should be respected. He wouldn’t put up with disobedience. But he was good... so although he was an absolute monarch, he only gave reasonable orders.

If I were to command a general to change into a sea bird,' he would often say, 'and the general didn't obey me, it would be my fault.'

'May I sit down,' asked the little prince timidly.

'I *command* you to sit down,' replied the king, pulling aside a fold of his ermine cloak.

But the little prince was puzzled. The planet was so tiny. What could the king reign over?

'Sire,' he said, 'excuse my asking but... '

'I command you to ask,' the king said hurriedly.

'What do you reign over, sire?'

'Everything,' replied the king with majestic simplicity.

'Everything?'

With a discreet gesture the king indicated his planet, other planets, the stars.

'Over all that?' said the little prince.

'Over all that,' replied the king.

'For he wasn't only an absolute monarch, but a universal one too.

'And the stars obey you, do they?'

'Of course they do,' said the king. 'Instantly. I won't tolerate indiscipline.'

Such power amazed the little prince. If he had it he'd be able to watch not just forty-four, but seventy-two, or even a hundred, or even two hundred sunsets the same day... without even having to move his chair! And as he was feeling a bit sad at the thought of his lost planet, he ventured to ask the king a favour:

'I'd like to watch a sunset... Will you command the sun to set, to please me... ?



'If I were to order a general to fly from flower to flower like a butterfly, or to write a tragedy, or to change into a sea bird, and the general didn't carry out the order, which of us would be in the wrong?'

'You would,' said the little prince, briefly.

‘Correct. One must only ask of people what they’re capable of doing,’ the king went on. ‘Authority rests primarily in reason. If you were to command your people to go and throw themselves into the sea, there’d be a revolution. I have the right to expect obedience because my orders are reasonable.’

‘So what about my sunset?’ said the little prince, who never gave up a question once he’d asked it.

‘You’ll get your sunset. I shall insist on it. But I shall use my knowledge of the science of government to wait till conditions are favourable.’

‘And when will that be?’ asked the little prince.

‘Ahem, well,’ replied the king, consulting a large calendar, ‘let me see... it’ll be about... more or less... it’ll be... this evening at about seven-forty. And you’ll see how well-obeyed I am.’

The little prince yawned. He was sorry he wasn’t going to get his sunset. And he was already a bit bored.

‘There’s nothing else for me to do here,’ he said to the king. ‘I’m going to leave.’

‘Don’t leave!’ said the king who was so proud to have a subject. ‘Don’t leave! I’ll make you a minister!’

‘Minister of what?’

‘Of... of justice!’

‘But there’s no one to judge!’

‘You never know,’ said the king. ‘I haven’t made a tour of my realm yet. I’m very old. There’s no room for a carriage and it tires me to walk.’

‘Oh, but I’ve already looked!’ said the prince, and he leant over to have another peek at the other side of the planet. ‘There’s no one there either.’

‘In that case,’ the king replied, ‘you will judge yourself. That’s the hardest thing. It’s very much harder to judge oneself than to judge others. If you succeed in doing it well, you’ll be a truly wise man.’

‘But I can do it anywhere,’ said the little prince. ‘I don’t have to live here.’

‘Ahem!’ said the king. ‘I believe there’s an old rat somewhere on my planet. I hear it at night. You can judge that. You can condemn it to death from time to time. So its life will depend on your justice. But then you’ll pardon it each time in order to save it. There is only the one.’

'I don't want to condemn anyone or anything to death,' said the little prince, 'and I'm going to leave.'

'No,' said the king.

But the little prince didn't really want to hurt the old king. So, once he was ready, he said:

'If your majesty would like to be obeyed promptly, you could give me a reasonable command. For example, you could command me to leave within a minute. It seems to me that conditions are favourable.'

As the king didn't reply, the little prince sighed and, after a moment's hesitation, left.

'I make you my ambassador!' the king hastily called after him. He had a great air of authority.

'Grown-ups really are peculiar,' thought the little prince to himself during his journey.

XI

On the second planet lived a swank:

‘Ah! Good! Here’s a fan coming to visit me!’ cried the swank as soon as he spotted the little prince approaching.

Because for swanks other people are all fans.

‘Hello,’ said the little prince. ‘What a funny hat you’re wearing.’



'It's for acknowledging applause,' replied the swank. 'I doff it when people clap. Unfortunately no one ever comes here.'

'Is that so?' said the little prince, wondering what he was talking about.

'Clap your hands together,' the swank advised him.

The little prince clapped his hands together. The swank doffed his hat and bowed modestly.

‘This is more fun than visiting the king,’ the little prince thought to himself. And he clapped his hands together some more. The swank bowed and doffed his hat again.

After five minutes of exercise the little prince got bored with this game.

‘What do I have to do to make the hat fall off?’ he asked.

But the swank didn’t hear. Swanks only ever hear praise.

‘Do you really admire me a lot?’ he asked the little prince.

‘What does “admire” mean?’

“‘Admire’ means recognize that I am the handsomest, best-dressed, richest and most intelligent man on this planet...’

‘But you’re alone on your planet!’

‘Admire me all the same! As a favour.’

‘I admire you,’ said the little prince, shrugging his shoulders. But what could possibly interest him in that?

So he left.

‘Grown-ups really are very peculiar,’ he thought to himself during his journey.



XII

A drinker lived on the next planet. This was a very short visit but it plunged the little prince into a fit of depression.

He found the drinker sitting between a collection of empty bottles and a collection of full bottles.

'What are you doing?' the little prince asked him.

'Drinking,' said the drinker lugubriously.

'Why?' asked the little prince.

'To forget,' replied the drinker.

'To forget what?' enquired the little prince who already felt sorry for him.

'To forget I'm ashamed,' the drinker confessed, hanging his head.

'Ashamed of what?' asked the little prince, in case he could help.

'Ashamed of drinking!' finished the drinker and lapsed into silence.

So the little prince left, puzzled.

'Grown-ups really are very, very peculiar,' he thought to himself during the journey.

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XIII

The fourth planet was the businessman's. He was so busy that he didn't even look up when the little prince arrived.

'Good morning,' said the prince. 'Your cigarette's gone out.'

'Three and two makes five. Five and seven, twelve. Twelve and three, fifteen. Good morning. Fifteen and seven, twenty-two. Twenty-two and six, twenty-eight. No time to relight it. Twenty-six and five, thirty-one. Phew! So that makes five hundred and one million, six hundred and twenty-two thousand, seven hundred and thirty-one.'

'Five hundred million what?'

'Eh? Are you still here? Five hundred and one million... erm... I forget. I've got so much work to do! I'm a serious man I am. I don't idle away my life! Two and five, seven...'

'Five hundred and one million what?' repeated the little prince who'd never in his life given up a question once he'd asked it.



The businessman looked up. 'I've only been interrupted three times in the forty-four years I've lived on this planet. The first time was twenty-two years ago by a beetle that arrived from somewhere or other. It made an appalling noise and I made four mistakes in my sums. The second time was eleven years ago when I had an attack of rheumatism. I don't get enough exercise. I haven't got time to go gallivanting about. I'm serious, I am. And the third time... well this is it! So where was I? Five hundred and one million...'

'Million what?'

The businessman realised there was no hope of peace:

'Those tiny things you sometimes see in the sky.'

'Flies?'

'No, no! Those tiny shiny things.'

'Bees?'

'No, no, no! Those little twinkling things that make idle people daydream. But I'm serious, I am. I haven't got time for daydreams.'

'Oh, stars!'

‘That’s it. Stars.’

‘But what are you doing with five hundred million stars?’

‘Five hundred and one million, six hundred and twenty-two thousand, seven hundred and thirty. I’m serious and precise, I am.’

‘But what are you doing with them?’

‘What am I doing with them?’

‘Yes.’

‘Nothing. I own them.’

‘Oh, so you own the stars, do you?’

‘Yes.’

‘But I’ve just met a king who...’

‘Kings don’t *own*. They reign over. It’s quite different.’

‘But what use is it to you to own the stars?’

‘It makes me rich.’

‘And what use is it to be rich?’

‘Then I can buy more stars, if anyone finds any.’

‘He uses the same logic as the drunkard,’ thought the little prince to himself.

‘However he went on asking questions:

‘How can you own stars?’

‘Who do you think owns them?’ snapped the businessman gruffly.

‘I don’t know. No one.’

‘Right. So I own them because I thought of it first.’

‘And that’s all it takes, is it?’

‘Of course. If you find a diamond that doesn’t belong to anyone, it’s *yours*. If you find an island that doesn’t belong to anyone, it’s *yours*. If you have an idea before anyone else, you patent it, it’s *yours*. And I own the stars because no one’s thought of owning them before.’

‘That’s true,’ said the little prince. ‘And what are you doing with them?’

‘I’m managing them. I’m counting and recounting them,’ said the businessman. ‘It’s difficult, but I’m a serious man!’

The little prince still wasn’t satisfied:

‘If I owned a scarf I could wear it round my neck. If I owned a flower I could pick it and take it away. But you can’t pick the stars.’

‘No. But I can put them in the bank.’

‘What does that mean?’

‘It means I can write how many stars I own on a piece of paper and then lock the piece of paper up in a drawer.’

‘And that’s it?’

‘It’s enough.’

‘It’s amusing,’ the little prince thought. ‘It’s even a little poetic. But it’s hardly serious.’

The little prince had very different ideas from grown-ups about which things are serious.

He went on: ‘I myself own a flower that I water every day. I own three volcanoes that I rake out once a week. Because I also rake out the extinct one. Just in case. It’s useful to my volcanoes and to my flower to be owned by me. But you’re no use to your stars...’

The businessman opened his mouth but couldn’t think of anything to say and the little prince left.

‘Grown-ups really are quite extraordinary,’ he thought to himself simply, during the journey.

XIV

The fifth planet was really peculiar. It was the smallest of all. There was just enough room for a lamp-post and a lamp-lighter. The little prince couldn't understand what possible use it could be to have a lamp-post and a lamp-lighter somewhere in the sky on a planet without houses or people. However he thought to himself: 'This man may well be absurd. But he's less absurd than the king, the swank, the businessman or the drinker. At least his work has meaning. When he lights the lamp it's as if another star was born, or a flower. When he puts his lamp out the star or the flower goes back to sleep. It's a very beautiful job. It's useful because it's beautiful.'

When he landed on the planet he greeted the lamp-lighter respectfully:

'Good morning. Why have you just put your lamp out?'

'Orders,' replied the lamp-lighter. 'Good morning.'

'What are your orders?'

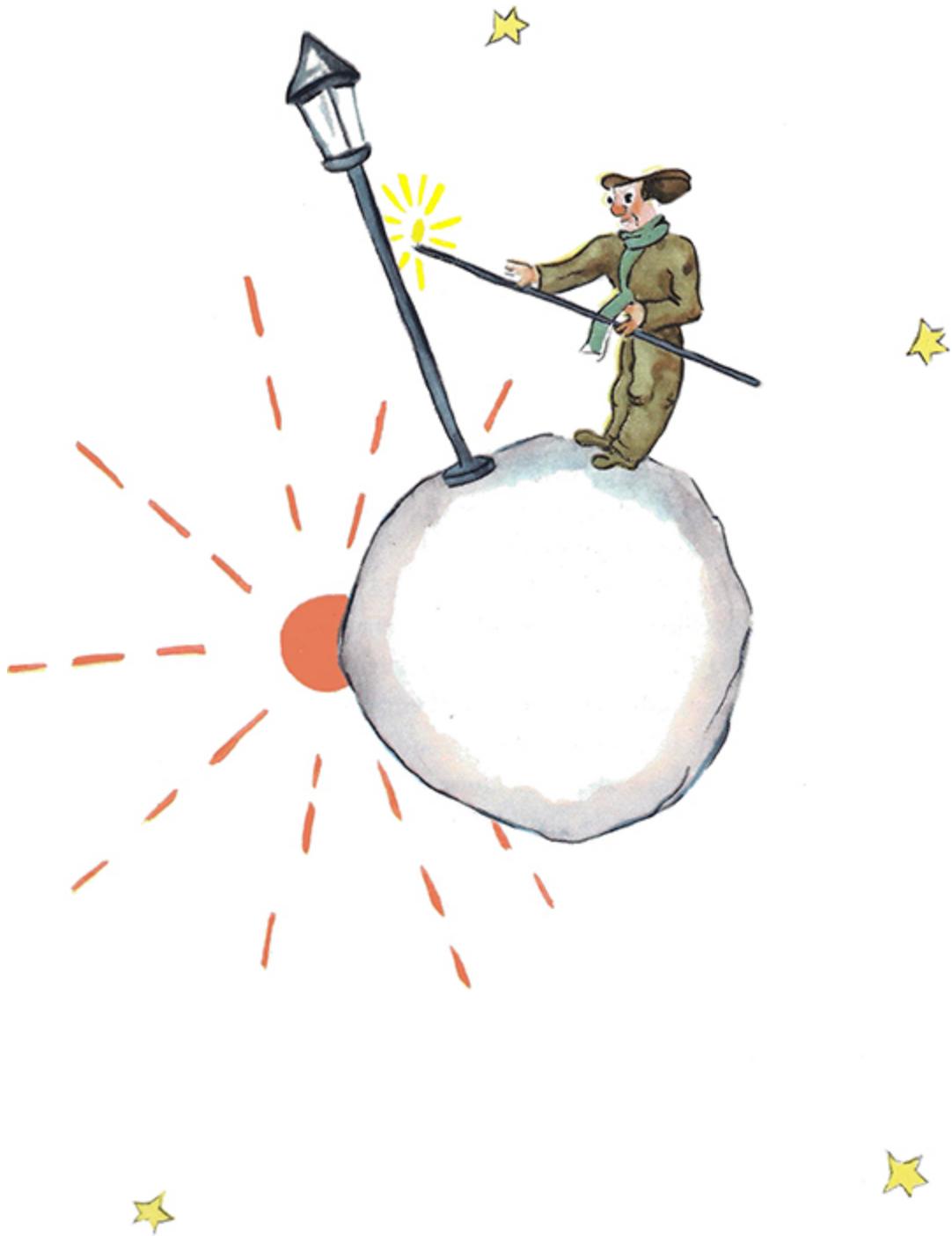
'To put my lamp out. Good evening.' And he re-lit it.

'But why have you just re-lit it?'

'Orders,' said the lamp-lighter.

'I don't understand,' said the little prince.

'There's nothing to understand,' said the lamp-lighter. 'Orders are orders. Good morning.' And he put the lamp out again. Then he wiped his forehead with a red check handkerchief.



This is a dreadful job.

‘This is a dreadful job. It used to be reasonable. I put the lamp out in the morning and I lit it in the evening. I had all day to rest and all night to sleep...’

‘And your orders have changed since then, have they?’

'No, they haven't!' said the lamp-lighter. 'That's the problem! The planet's been turning gradually faster each year and the orders haven't changed!'

'So?' said the little prince.

'So now it turns once a minute and I don't get a moment's rest. I have to light it and put it out once a minute!'

'How funny! So your days only last a minute!'

'It's not funny at all,' said the lamp-lighter. 'We've already been talking for a month.'

'Have we?'

'Yes. Thirty minutes. Thirty days! Good evening!' And he re-lit the lamp.

The little prince looked at this lamp-lighter who was so faithful to his orders and liked him. He thought about how he used to get sunsets by pulling his chair back. He wanted to help his friend:

'You know, there is a way you could rest when you want to...'

'I never stop wanting to,' said the lamp-lighter. For it's possible to be both faithful and lazy.

The little prince went on:

'Your planet's so small you could walk right round it in three steps. All you have to do is walk slowly enough to stay in the sun. When you want a rest you can walk... and make the day last as long as you like.'

'That's not really very much help,' said the lamp-lighter. 'What I like best in life is sleeping.'

'That's rotten luck,' said the little prince.

'It is,' said the lamp-lighter. 'Good morning.' And he put his lamp out.

As the little prince continued on his way he thought to himself:

'Neither the king, nor the swank, nor the drinker, nor the businessman would think much of him. Yet he's the only one who doesn't seem silly to me. Maybe because he's busy with something other than himself.'

He sighed regretfully and thought to himself:

'He's the only one I could have made friends with. But his planet really is too small. There's no room for two...'

What the little prince couldn't bring himself to admit was that he was above all sorry to leave a planet that was blessed with one thousand four hundred and forty sunsets every twenty-four hours!

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XV

The sixth planet was ten times bigger. It was inhabited by an old gentleman who wrote enormous books.

‘Ah, an explorer!’ he cried when he saw the little prince.

The little prince sat down at a table, panting. He’d already come so far!

‘Where are you from?’ said the old gentleman.

‘What’s that thick book?’ asked the little prince. ‘What are you doing here?’

‘I’m a geographer?’ said the old gentleman.

‘What’s a geographer?’



‘An expert on the location of seas, rivers, cities, mountains and deserts.’

‘That’s really interesting,’ said the little prince. ‘At last a real profession!’ And he glanced round him at the geographer’s planet. He’d never seen such a majestic place.

‘Your planet’s really beautiful. Are there any oceans?’

‘I have no way of knowing,’ replied the geographer.

‘Oh!’ said the little prince, disappointed. ‘What about mountains?’

‘I have no way of knowing,’ replied the geographer.

‘What about cities, or rivers, or deserts?’

‘I have no way of knowing that either,’ said the geographer.

‘But you’re a geographer!’

‘True,’ said the geographer. ‘But I’m not an explorer. I have absolutely no explorers. It’s not up to a geographer to go and count cities, rivers, mountains, seas, oceans and deserts. A geographer is far too important to waste his time wandering about. He doesn’t leave his office. However he receives visits from explorers there. He interrogates them and notes down their experiences. And if one of them has had experiences that seem interesting enough, the geographer conducts an enquiry into the explorer’s morals.’

‘Whatever for?’

‘Because a lying explorer would cause disasters in geography books. And so would a drunken explorer.’

‘Why?’ said the little prince.

‘Because drunkards see double. So a geographer would make a note of two mountains where there was only one.’

‘I know someone who’d make a bad explorer,’ said the little prince.

‘Very likely. So, if the explorer’s morals seem satisfactory, an enquiry is conducted into his discovery.’

‘You go and look?’

‘No. That’s too complicated. But the explorer is required to supply proof. For example, if it concerns the discovery of a huge mountain, he’s required to bring back some giant rocks.’

The geographer suddenly got excited.

‘But you’re from a long way away! You’re an explorer! You must describe your planet to me!’

The geographer opened his register and sharpened his pencil. The explorer’s story is written in pencil first. Ink is only used after the explorer has supplied proof.

‘Well?’ said the geographer.

‘Oh, my home isn’t really very interesting,’ said the little prince. ‘It’s tiny. I have three volcanoes. Two active ones, and one extinct. Though you never know.’

‘You never know,’ said the geographer.

‘I also have a flower.’

‘We’re not interested in flowers,’ said the geographer.

‘Why ever not? It’s the prettiest thing there!’

‘Because flowers are ephemeral.’

‘What does “ephemeral” mean?’

‘Geography books are the most precious of all,’ said the geographer.
‘They never go out of date. It’s very rare for a mountain to move. It’s very rare for an ocean to dry up. We write about eternal things.’

‘But extinct volcanoes might become active again,’ said the little prince.
What does “ephemeral” mean?’

‘It’s all the same to us whether volcanoes are active or extinct,’ said the geographer. ‘Mountains are what matter for us. And they don’t move.’

‘But what does “ephemeral” mean?’ repeated the little prince who had never once in his life given up a question once he’d asked it.

‘It means: “doomed to disappear soon”.’

‘Is my flower doomed to disappear soon?’

‘Of course.’

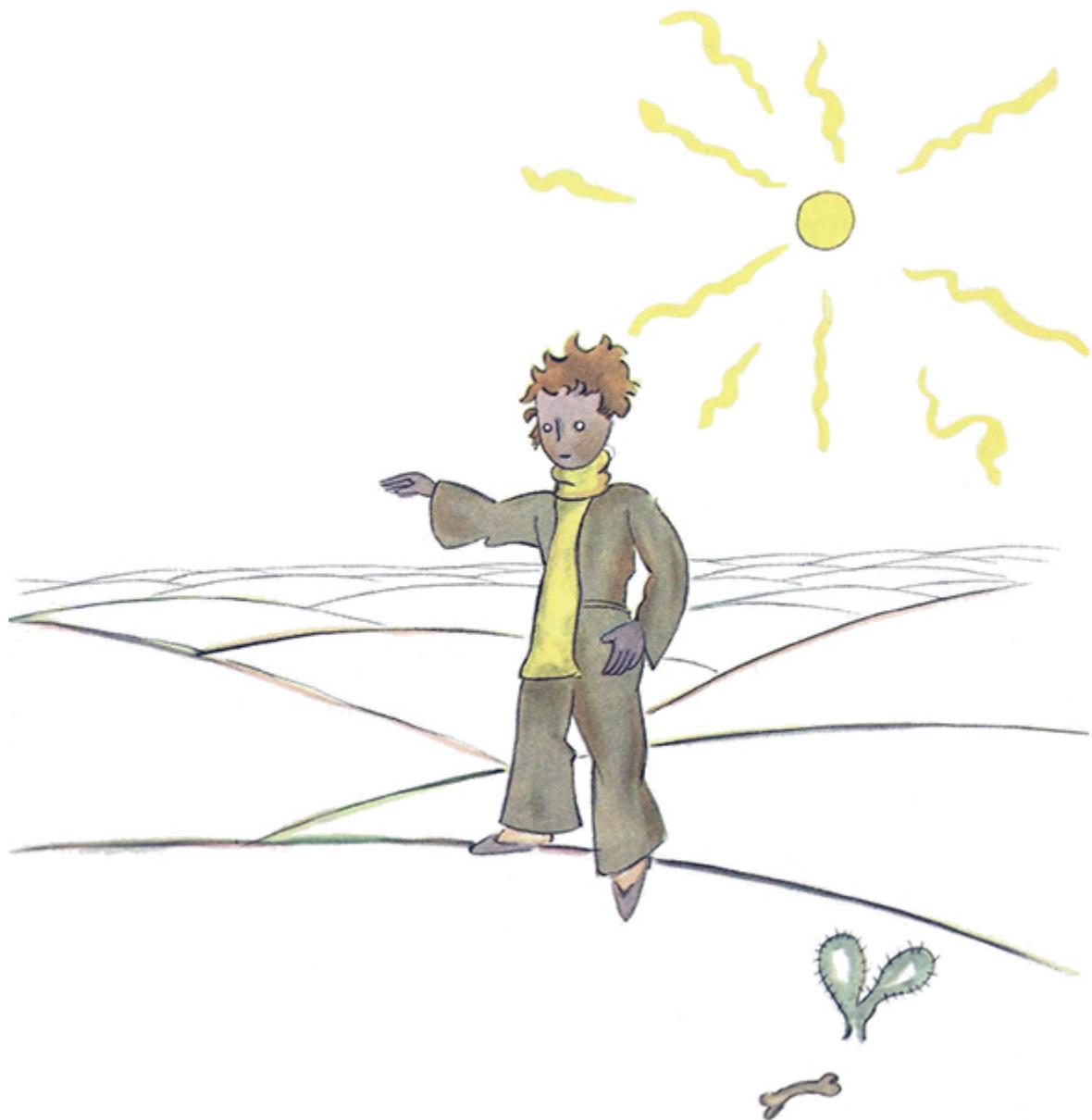
‘My flower is ephemeral,’ thought the little prince to himself, ‘and she’s only got four thorns to defend herself against the world! And I’ve left her at home all alone!’

It was the first time he’d regretted leaving. But he soon took heart again.

‘Where do you advise me to go?’ he asked.

‘Planet Earth,’ replied the geographer. ‘It has a good reputation...’

So the little prince left, thinking about his flower.



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XVI

So the seventh planet was Earth.

Earth is no ordinary planet! There are a hundred and eleven kings (including black ones, of course), seven thousand geographers, nine hundred thousand businessmen, seven and a half million drunkards, and three hundred and eleven million swanks, all of which adds up to about two billion grown-ups.

To give you an idea of the size of Earth, I can tell you that before the invention of electricity a veritable army of four hundred and sixty-two thousand five hundred and eleven lamp-lighters had to be maintained on all six continents.

From a distance it made a splendid sight. The movements of this army were ordered like the chorus line of a ballet.

First came the lamp-lighters of New Zealand and Australia. Having lit their lamps, these then went off to bed. Then the lamp-lighters of China and Siberia took their turn in the dance. Then they too were whisked away into the wings. So then it was the turn of the lamp-lighters of Russia and India. Then of Africa and Europe. Then those of South America. Then those of North America. And no one ever made a mistake or came on stage in the wrong order. It was quite a spectacle.

The only ones to lead a life of casual leisure were the lamp-lighters of the single lamp-post at the North pole and the single lamp-post at the South pole: they only had to work twice a year.

XVII

When you're trying to be witty, it sometimes happens that you find yourself telling fibs. I haven't been all that honest in telling you about lamp-lighters. There's a danger I may give a false impression of our planet to anyone who doesn't know it. People take up very little space on Earth. If the two billion people on Earth stood close together in rows, as they would at a meeting, they could all easily fit into a public place twenty miles square. You could crowd the whole of humanity onto the least little Pacific island.

Grown-ups won't believe this of course. They imagine they take up lots of room. They think they're as important as baobabs. So the thing to do is advise them to do the necessary sums. They love figures, they'll enjoy it. But don't waste your time on this task. There's no need. You can trust me.

So the little prince was very surprised, once he'd landed, to see no one. He was already beginning to wonder if he'd come to the wrong planet when a moon-coloured ring stirred in the sand.

'Good evening,' said the little prince, on the off chance.

'Good evening,' said the snake.

'Which planet am I on?' asked the little prince.

'On Earth, in Africa,' replied the snake.

'Ah! ... Aren't there any people on Earth then?'

'This is a desert. There aren't any people in the desert. The Earth is big,' said the snake.

The little prince sat down on a stone and looked up at the sky:

'I wonder if the stars are lit up so that everyone can find their own one day,' he said. 'Look at my planet. It's directly overhead. But how far away it is!'

'It's beautiful,' said the snake. 'Why have you come here?'

'I have problems with a flower,' said the little prince.

'Oh,' said the snake.

They were both silent for a while.

'Where are all the people?' asked the prince again. 'It's a bit lonely in the desert.'

‘It’s lonely where people are too,’ said the snake.

The little prince looked at him for a long time:

‘You’re a funny creature,’ he said at last. ‘As thin as my finger...’

‘But I’m more powerful than the finger of a king,’ said the snake.

The little prince smiled:

‘You’re not very powerful... you haven’t got any legs ... you can’t get very far...’

I can take you farther than any ship,’ said the snake.

He coiled himself around the little prince’s ankle, like a golden anklet:

‘I return whoever I touch to the earth they’re made of,’ he went on. ‘But you’re pure and come from a star...’

The little prince didn’t reply.

‘I feel sorry for you, so frail on this Earth of granite. I can help you if you ever find yourself missing your planet too much. I can...’

‘Oh, I understand perfectly well,’ said the prince. ‘But why do you always talk in riddles?’

‘I solve them all,’ said the snake.

And they were both silent.



'You're a funny creature,' he said at last.
'As thin as my finger...'

XVIII

The little prince crossed the desert and only met a flower, a very ordinary flower with three petals.

‘Good morning,’ said the little prince.

‘Good morning,’ said the flower.

‘Where are all the people?’ asked the little prince politely.

The flower had once seen a caravan go by:

‘People? There are six or seven of them, I think. I saw them once years ago. But you can never find them. They’re blown by the wind. They haven’t got any roots you see. That’s their problem.’

‘Goodbye,’ said the little prince.

‘Goodbye,’ said the flower.

XIX

The little prince climbed a high mountain. The only mountains he'd ever known had been his three volcanoes which only came up to his knees. He used to use the extinct volcano as a stool. So he thought to himself: 'I'll be able to see the whole planet and all the people at a single glance from the top of a high mountain like this.' But all he could see were sharp, spiky rocks.

'Hello,' he said on the off chance.

'Hello... Hello... Hello...' replied an echo.

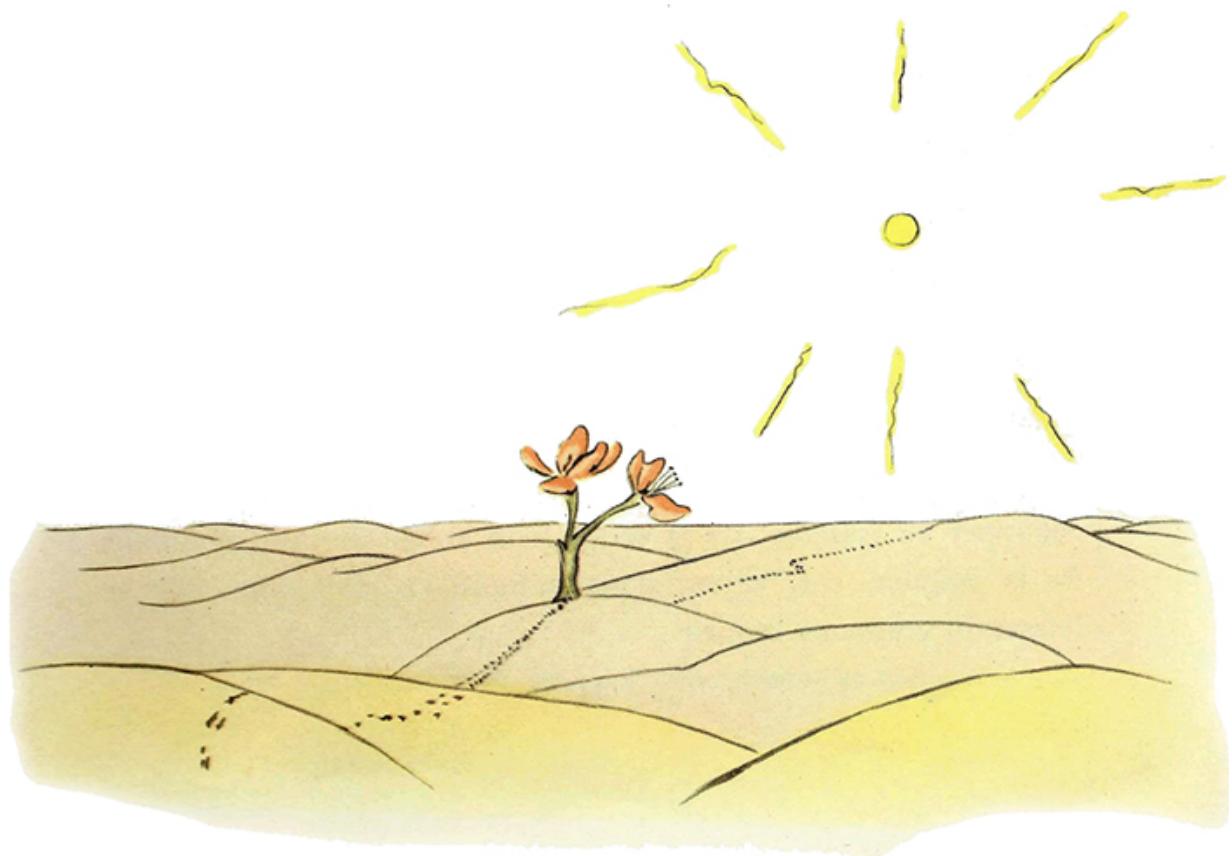
'Who are you?' asked the little prince.

'Who are you...? Who are you...? Who are you...?' replied the echo.

'Be my friends. I'm lonely,' he said. 'I'm lonely...'

'I'm lonely...'

'I'm lonely...' replied the echo.



Then he thought: ‘What a strange planet! It’s all dry, all spiky and all salty. And the people have no imagination. They repeat exactly what you say to them. At home my flower always spoke first...’

XX

But after walking across long stretches of sand, rocks and snow, the little prince discovered a road. And roads always lead to people.

‘Hello,’ he said.

He was in a rose garden.

‘Hello,’ said the roses.

The little prince stared at them. They all looked like his flower.

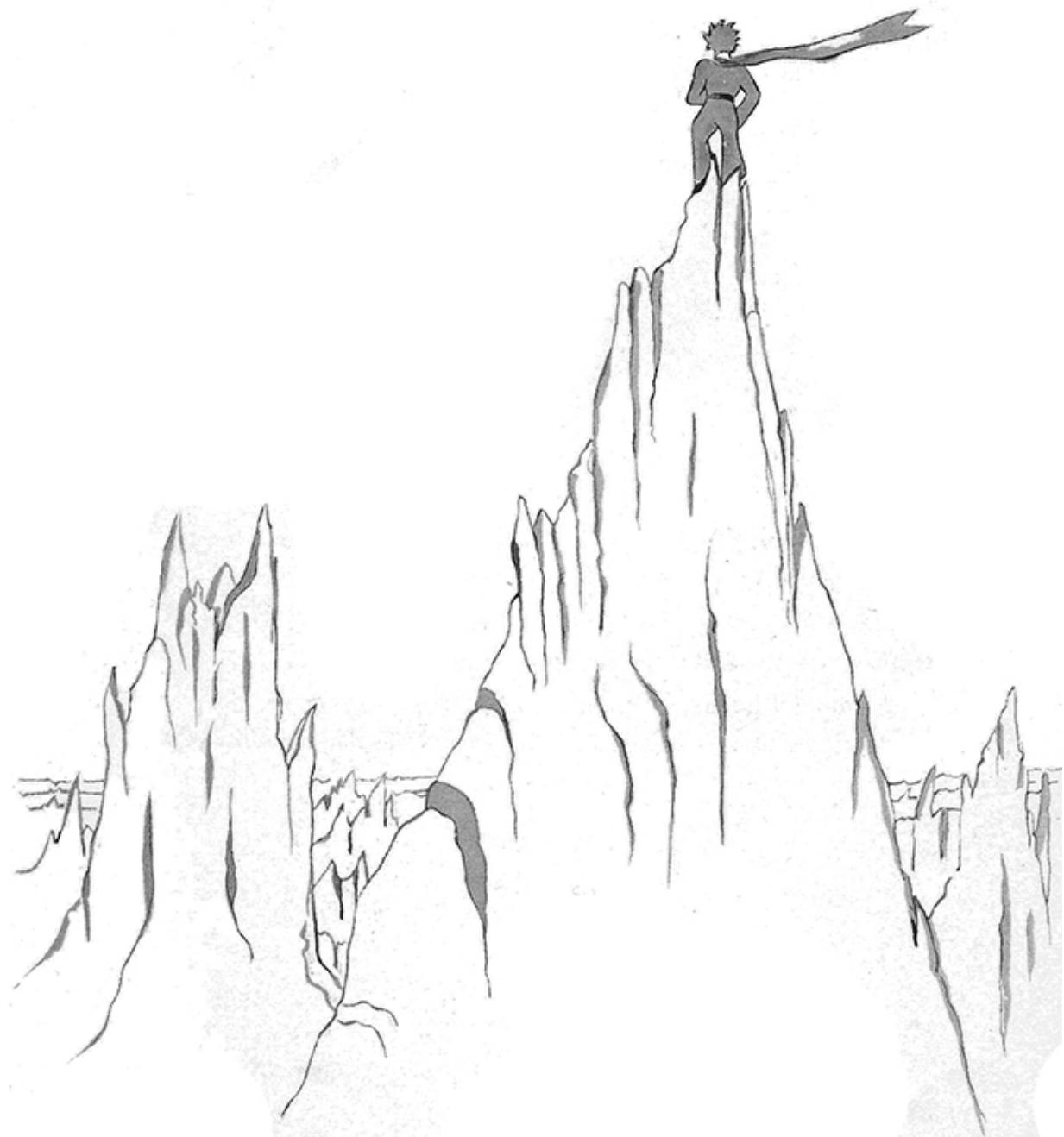
‘Who are you?’ he asked them, stunned.

‘We are roses,’ said the roses.

‘Oh!’ said the little prince.

And he was very unhappy. His flower had told him she was the only one of her kind in the whole universe. And here were five thousand exactly the same in a single garden!

‘She’d be really cross if she could see this,’ he thought. ‘She’d cough herself silly and play dead to escape the ridicule. And I’d have to pretend to take care of her, because otherwise she’d really die just to humiliate me...’



‘What a strange planet! It’s all dry, all spiky and all salty.



Then he said to himself: ‘I thought I was rich with a unique flower, when all I own is a common rose; that and my three volcanoes that only come up to my knees, one of which may be extinct forever anyway. It doesn’t make me a very great prince...’

And he lay down in the grass and cried.

XXI

That's when the fox appeared:

'Good morning,' said the fox.

'Good morning,' replied the little prince politely. He looked round but couldn't see anything.

'I'm over here, under the apple tree,' said the voice.

'Who are you?' said the little prince. 'You're very pretty.'

'I'm a fox,' said the fox.

'Come and play with me,' suggested the little prince. I'm so sad...'

'I can't play with you,' said the fox. 'I haven't been tamed.'

'Oh, sorry,' said the little prince.

But after thinking about this, he added:

'What does "tamed" mean?'

'You aren't from these parts,' said the fox. 'What are you after?'

'People,' said the little prince. 'What does "tamed" mean?'

'People have guns,' said the fox, 'and they hunt. It's a real nuisance. They also keep chickens. It's their one good point. Are you after chickens?'



‘No,’ said the little prince. ‘I’m looking for friends. What does “tamed” mean?’

‘It’s something that’s too often forgotten,’ said the fox. ‘It means: “to make ties”...’

‘To make ties?’

‘Of course,’ said the fox. ‘For me you’re still no more than a little boy, like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I don’t need you. And you don’t need me either. For you I’m no more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, we’ll need each other. For me you’ll be unique in the world...’

‘I’m beginning to understand,’ said the little prince. ‘There’s a flower... I think she’s tamed me...’

‘Very likely,’ said the fox. ‘You see all sorts of things on Earth...’

‘Oh, this isn’t on Earth,’ said the little prince.

The fox was intrigued. ‘On another planet?’

‘Yes.’

‘Are there hunters on that planet?’

‘No.’

‘How interesting! What about chickens.’

‘No.’

‘Nothing’s perfect,’ said the fox, sighing.

But the fox came back to his idea:

‘My life’s boring. I hunt chickens. People hunt me. All chickens are the same. And all people are the same. So I’m a bit bored. But if you tame me, my life will become sunny. There’ll be footsteps that sound different from the rest. The rest make me rush underground. Yours will call me out of my lair like music. And then, just look! You see those cornfields over there. I don’t eat bread. Corn means nothing to me. Cornfields don’t make me think of anything. And that’s sad. But you have golden hair. So after you’ve tamed me it’ll be marvellous. The golden corn will make me think of you. And I’ll love listening to the wind in the corn...’

The fox stopped and stared at the little prince:

‘Please,’ he said. ‘Tame me!’

‘I’d like to,’ replied the little prince. ‘But I haven’t got a lot of time. I want to make friends and learn about things.’

‘You only know about things you tame,’ said the fox. ‘People haven’t got time to know about things any more. They buy things ready-made in the shops. But as there aren’t any shops that sell friendship, they don’t have friends anymore. If you want a friend, tame me!’

‘What must I do?’ asked the little prince.

‘You must be very patient,’ replied the fox. ‘First, you must sit a little way away, like that, in the grass. I’ll look at you out of the corner of my eye and you’ll say nothing. Language causes misunderstandings. But, every day, you can sit a little bit closer...’

The next day the little prince came back.

‘It would have been better to come back at the same time,’ said the fox. ‘If you come at, say, four o’clock in the afternoon, by three o’clock I’ll be getting excited. The later it gets the more excited I’ll get. By four o’clock I’ll already be fretting and worrying; I’ll discover the price of happiness! But if you come at any old time, I’ll never know when to get my heart ready. One must have rites.’

‘What’s a “rite”?’ asked the little prince.

‘It’s something else that’s too often forgotten,’ said the fox. ‘It’s what makes one day different from another, one hour different from another. For

example, my hunters have a rite. Every Thursday they dance with the village girls. So Thursdays are marvellous! I go for a walk as far as the vineyard. If the hunters danced any old day, all days would be the same and I'd never get a break.'

So the little prince tamed the fox. And when it was nearly time to leave:

'Oh dear!' said the fox. I'm going to cry...'

'It's your own fault,' said the little prince. 'I didn't want to hurt you, but you wanted me to tame you...'

'Of course,' said the fox.

'But you're going to cry,' said the little prince.

'Of course,' said the fox.

'So you gain nothing!'



'Yes, I do. Because of the colour of the corn.'

Then he added:

'Go and see the roses again. You'll understand that yours is unique. Come back to say goodbye. And I'll make you a present of a secret.'



If you come at, say, four o'clock in the afternoon, by three o'clock I'll be getting excited.

The little prince went off to see the roses again: 'You're not in the least like my rose,' he told them. 'You're nothing yet. No one's tamed you and you haven't tamed anyone. You're like my fox was. He was no different from a hundred thousand other foxes. But now he's my friend, and he's unique in the world.'

The roses didn't like this at all.

'You're beautiful,' he went on, 'but empty. No one could die for you. Of course an ordinary passer-by might think my rose was like you. But she

alone is more important than all of you put together. Because she's the one I watered. Because she's the one I put under glass. Because she's the one I protected with the wind-shield. Because it was for her I killed caterpillars (except two or three for butterflies). Because she was the one I listened to complaining, boasting, and even sometimes keeping quiet. Because she's my rose.'

Then he went back to the fox:

'Goodbye,' he said.

'Goodbye,' said the fox. 'This is my secret. It's very simple: We only really see with our hearts. What matters is invisible to the eyes.'

'What matters is invisible to the eyes,' repeated the little prince, so as not to forget.

'It's the time you've spent on your rose that makes her so important.'

'It's the time I've spent on my rose...' said the little prince so as not to forget.



And he lay down in the grass and cried.

'People have forgotten this simple truth,' said the fox. 'But you mustn't forget. You become responsible forever for those you tame. You are responsible for your rose.'

'I am responsible for my rose...' repeated the little prince so as not to forget.

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XXII

‘Hello,’ said the little prince.

‘Hello,’ said the signalman.

‘What are you doing here?’ asked the little prince.

‘I’m sorting travellers out into batches of a thousand,’ said the signalman, ‘and sending the trains carrying them off to the right or to the left.’

And a glittering express roared through like thunder, its lights twinkling, making the signal-box shake.

‘They’re in a hurry,’ said the little prince. ‘What are they after?’

‘Even the engine-driver doesn’t know that,’ said the signalman.

‘A second glittering express roared through in the opposite direction.

‘Are they coming back already?’ asked the little prince.

‘It’s not the same one,’ said the signalman. ‘This is a junction.’

‘Weren’t they happy where they were?’

‘No one’s ever happy where they are,’ said the signalman.

There was the thunderclap of a third glittering express.

‘They’re following the first travellers, aren’t they?’ said the little prince.

‘They’re not following anyone,’ said the signalman.

‘They’re asleep inside, or yawning. Only the children have their noses pressed up against the glass.’

‘Only children know what they want,’ said the little prince. ‘They spend their time on ragdolls which become very important. And they cry if they’re taken away...’

‘They’re the lucky ones,’ said the signalman.

XXIII

‘Good morning,’ said the little prince.

‘Good morning,’ said the shopkeeper.

His shop sold pills which were guaranteed to quench your thirst. You take one a week and need never drink again.

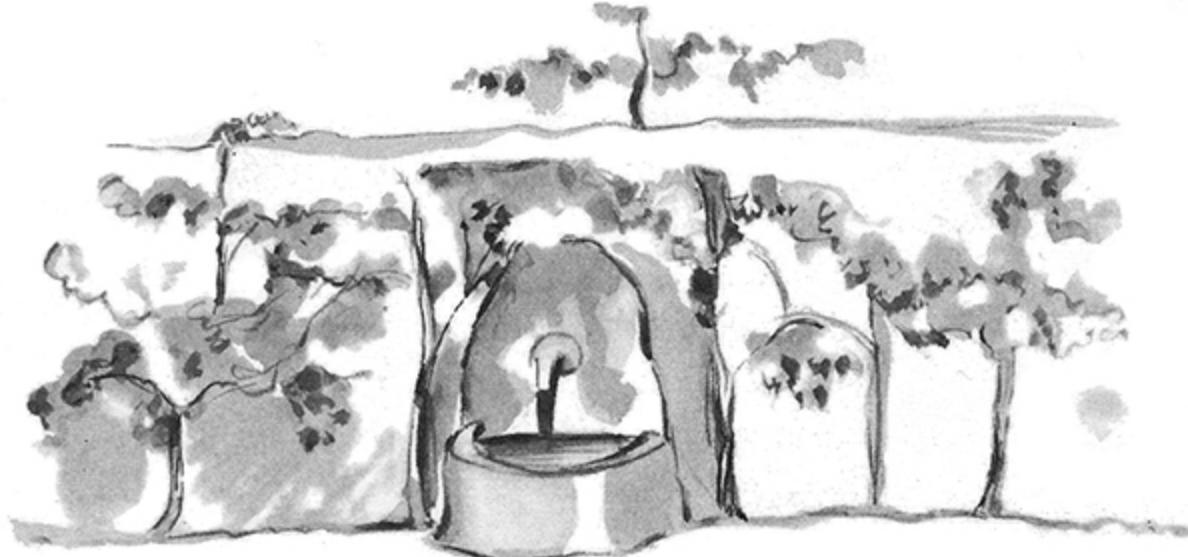
‘Why are you selling those?’ asked the little prince.

‘They save a lot of time,’ said the shopkeeper. ‘Experts have worked out that they save fifty-three minutes a week.’

‘And what do people do with their fifty-three minutes?’

‘Anything they want.’

‘If I had fifty-three minutes to spare,’ said the little prince, ‘I’d take a stroll down to the fountain...’



XXIV

It was the eighth day of my break-down in the desert and as I listened to the story of the shopkeeper, I was drinking my last drop of water.

‘Ah,’ I said to the little prince. ‘It’s lovely to hear your adventures, but I still haven’t repaired my plane. And now there’s nothing left to drink. If only I could take a stroll down to a fountain!’

‘My friend, the fox...’ he began.

‘Listen, young man, your friend, the fox, has got nothing to do with it anymore!’

‘Why?’

‘Because we’re going to die of thirst...’

He couldn’t see what I meant and replied:

‘It’s good to have a friend, even if you’re going to die. I’m really glad I’ve had a fox as a friend...’

He doesn’t realize the danger, I told myself. He’s never been hungry or thirsty. All he needs is a little sunlight...

But he looked at me and answered my thoughts:

‘I’m thirsty too... Let’s go and look for a well...’

I shrugged my shoulders wearily. It’s absurd to go looking for a well in the immensity of the desert. Still, we set out.

After we’d been walking for hours in silence the night came on and the stars came out. My thirst had made me a bit feverish and I saw them as if in a dream. The little prince’s words danced in my memory:

‘So you’re thirsty too, are you?’ I said.

He didn’t answer my question. He simply said:

‘Water can be good for the heart too...’

I didn’t understand his reply but I said nothing. I knew one must never question him.

He was tired. He sat down. I sat down next to him. And, after a while, he said:

‘The stars are beautiful because of a flower that can’t be seen...’

‘Of course,’ I said. And I looked at the folds of sand in the moonlight without speaking.

‘The desert is beautiful,’ he added.

And it was true. I’ve always liked the desert. You can sit on a sand dune. There’s nothing to be seen, nothing to be heard. Yet something radiates in the silence...

‘What makes the desert beautiful,’ said the little prince, ‘is that there’s a well hidden somewhere...’

I was surprised to suddenly understand this mysterious radiation from the sand. When I was a little boy I once lived in an old house and there was a legend that treasure was buried there. Of course no one had ever been able to find it, and maybe no one had even looked. But it put a spell on the whole house. My house hid a secret in the depths of its heart...

‘Yes,’ I said to the little prince. ‘Whether it’s a house, or the stars, or a desert, the thing that makes them beautiful is invisible!’

‘I’m glad you agree with my fox,’ he said.

As the little prince had fallen asleep, I picked him up and set out again, carrying him in my arms. I was moved. It seemed to me I was carrying a fragile treasure. It even seemed to me there was nothing more fragile on Earth. I looked at his pale forehead and his closed eyes in the moonlight. The locks of his hair stirred in the wind and I thought to myself: ‘All I can see is no more than a shell. What matters is invisible...’ As his halfopened lips almost formed a smile I thought to myself again:

‘What moves me so much about this little sleeping prince is his loyalty to a flower. It’s the image of a rose that radiates from him like the flame of a lamp, even when he’s asleep...’ And he seemed even more fragile. Lamps need shielding: a gust of wind can blow them out... So I walked on till daybreak and discovered the well.



He laughed, pulled the rope, made the pulley turn.

XXV

‘People cram themselves into expresses,’ the little prince said ‘but don’t even know what they want anymore. So they worry and fret and go round in circles...’

And he added:

‘It’s not worth the trouble...’

The well we’d found wasn’t like a desert well. Desert wells are just hollows in the ground. Ours looked like a village well.

But there wasn’t a village and I thought I must be dreaming.

‘How strange!’ I said to the little prince. ‘Everything’s ready: the pulley, the bucket, the rope...’

He laughed, pulled the rope, made the pulley turn. And the pulley squeaked like an old weather-vane when the wind’s been asleep for a while.

‘Listen!’ said the little prince. ‘We’ve woken this well up and it’s singing...’

I didn’t want him to tire himself:

‘Let me do it,’ I told him. ‘It’s too heavy for you.’

Slowly I hauled the bucket up to the rim where I set it down firmly, the squeaking of the pulley still ringing in my ears. And in the still quivering water I saw the quivering sun.

‘I’m thirsty for that water,’ said the little prince. ‘Give me some to drink...’

Then at last I understood what he’d wanted!

I lifted the bucket to his lips. He drank with his eyes closed. What a treat it was! This water was more than just nourishment. It was born from the walk under the stars, the squeaking of the pulley, the work of lifting it. It did the heart good, like a present. When I was a little boy the Christmas tree lights, the music of midnight mass and loving smiles, all contributed to the magic of the Christmas present I received.

‘People here grow five thousand roses in a single garden,’ said the little prince ‘and still don’t find what they want...’

‘It’s true, they don’t,’ I replied...

‘Yet what they want could be found in a single rose, or a single mouthful of water...’

‘Yes, it could,’ I replied.

And the little prince added:

‘But the eyes are blind. One must look with the heart.’

I had drunk. I could breathe. At daybreak the sand is honey-coloured. I was also happy about this honey colour. Why had I got so upset?

‘You must keep your promise,’ the little prince said gently. He had come to sit next to me again.

‘What promise?’

‘You know... the muzzle for my sheep. I’m responsible for that flower!’

I got my sketches out of my pocket. The little prince caught sight of them and laughed:

‘Your baobabs look a bit like cabbages!’ he said.

‘Oh!’

And I’d been so proud of those baobabs!

‘Your fox’s ears look a bit like horns, and they’re too long!’ And he laughed again.

‘You’re unfair, young man. The only things I knew how to draw were open and closed boa-constrictors.’

‘Oh, they’ll do,’ he said. ‘Children will understand.’

So I drew a muzzle. And as I gave it to him, my heart missed a beat:

‘Have you got plans I don’t know about?’

But he didn’t reply. He just said:

‘You know, tomorrow it’ll be exactly a year since I fell to Earth...’

Then, after a silence he added:

‘It was quite near here...’

And he blushed.

And again I felt strangely troubled without knowing why. But I thought of a question:

‘So it wasn’t just coincidence that you were wandering around a thousand miles from human habitation that morning I met you eight days ago? You were on your way back to the place where you fell, weren’t you?’

The little prince blushed again.

And I added, hesitantly:

‘Because of the anniversary perhaps...?’

Once again the little prince blushed. He never answered questions, but a blush means ‘yes’, doesn’t it?

‘Oh dear,’ I said. ‘I’m afraid.’

But he replied:

‘Now you must go and work. You must go back to your machine. I’ll stay here. Come back tomorrow evening...’

But it didn’t set my mind at rest. I remembered the fox. You risk tears if you let yourself be tamed.

XXVI

Beside the well there was an old, ruined stone wall. When I came back from my work the following evening I saw my little prince from a long way off sitting up there, his legs dangling. And I heard him speaking:

‘You don’t remember then...’ he was saying. ‘This isn’t the exact place.’

Another voice must have spoken because he replied:

‘Yes, yes! Today’s the day all right. But this is not the exact spot...’

I continued walking towards the wall. I couldn’t see or hear anyone. But the little prince spoke again:

‘... Of course. You can see where my tracks begin in the sand. Just wait for me there. I’ll be there tonight.’

I was twenty metres from the wall and I still couldn’t see anything.

After a silence, the prince spoke again:

‘Your venom’s good, isn’t it? You’re sure it won’t hurt for long, aren’t you?’

I came to a halt, my heart in my mouth, but I still didn’t understand.

‘Now go away!’ he said. ‘I want to get down.’

Then I looked down at the foot of the wall and jumped with fright! There, raised up towards the little prince, was one of those yellow snakes that can kill you in thirty seconds.

Groping in my pocket for my revolver, I began to run but, hearing the noise I was making, the snake slipped off into the sand like a stream of water draining away and, without much haste, slid in among the stones with a slight metallic sound.

I got to the wall just in time to catch my little prince in my arms. He was as white as a sheet.

‘What’s all this about? So now you talk to snakes, do you?’

I’d loosened his habitual golden scarf. I’d cooled his temples with a damp cloth and I’d got him to drink. And now I dared not ask him more. He looked at me gravely and put his arms round my neck. I could feel his heart beating like a wounded bird dying of gunshot wounds. He said:

'I'm glad you've managed to find what you needed for your machine.
Now you'll be able to go home...'

'How did you know that?'

I'd come to tell him that, contrary to all expectations, I'd managed to mend my engine!

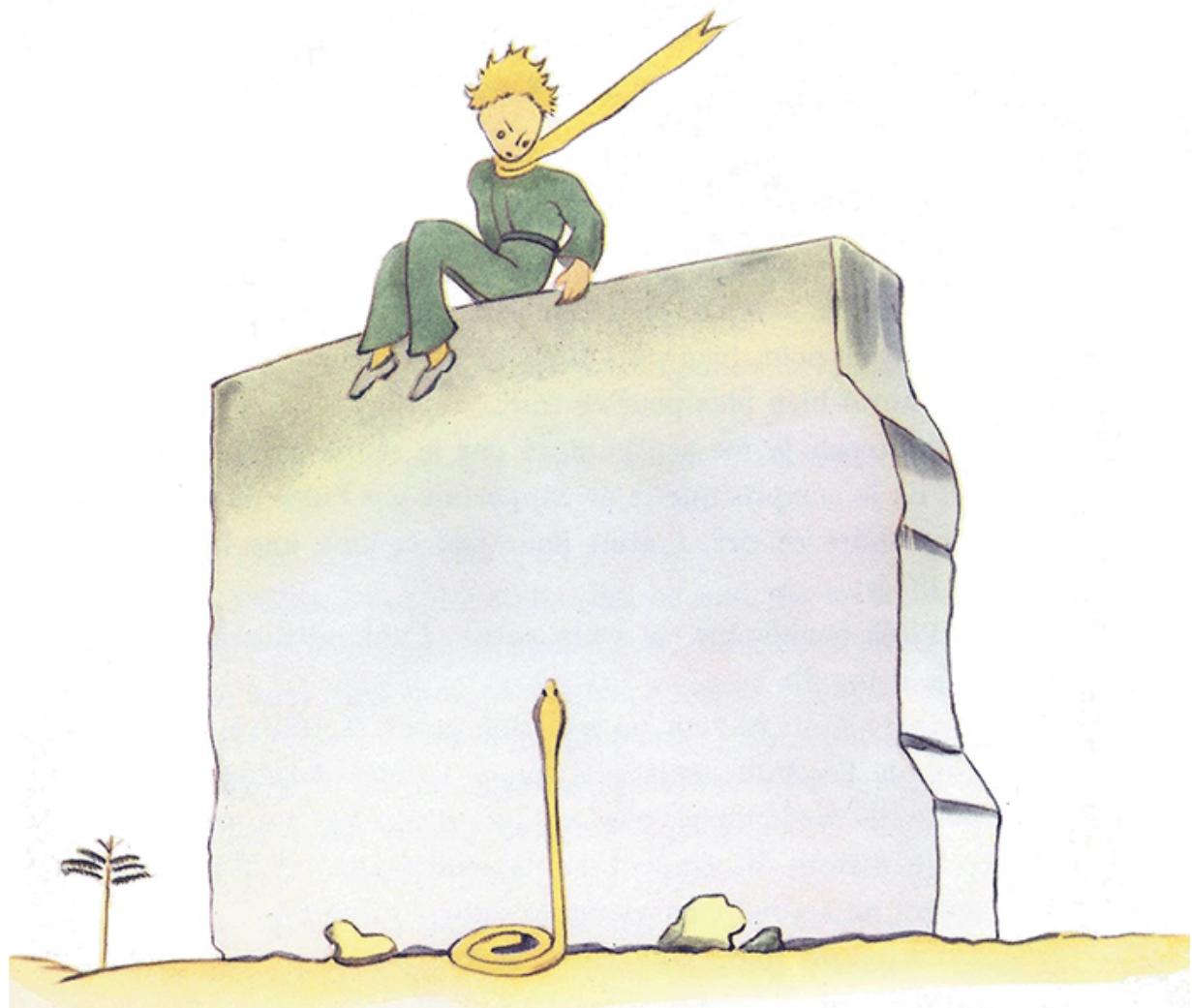
He didn't answer my question but added:

'I'm going home today too...'

Then, sadly:

'It's a lot farther... It's a lot harder...'

I could feel something extraordinary was about to happen. I was holding him in my arms like a little child, yet it seemed to me that he was falling vertically into an abyss and there was nothing I could do to stop him...



‘Now go away!’ he said. ‘I want to get down.’

He looked serious, far away, lost:
‘I’ve got your sheep. And I’ve got the box for the sheep. And I’ve got the muzzle...’

And he smiled sadly.

I waited a long time. I could feel him gradually warming up:

‘Poor little chap. It gave you a fright...’

He’d been afraid all right. But he laughed softly:

‘I’ll be a lot more frightened this evening...’

Once again I was chilled by the feeling that all was lost. I realized I couldn’t bear the idea of never hearing his laugh again. For me it was like a fountain in the desert.

‘Young man, I want to hear you laugh again...’

But he said:

‘It’ll be a year tonight. My star will be directly over the spot where I fell last year...’

‘Come on, young man, it’s just a bad dream, this story of a star and a pact between you and a snake, isn’t it?’

But he didn’t answer my question. He said:

‘What matters can’t be seen...’

‘Of course not...’

‘It’s the same with my flower. If you love a flower on a star, looking at the sky at night is a pleasure. All the stars are in bloom.’

‘Of course.’

‘It’s the same with the water. The water you gave me to drink was like music, because of the pulley and the rope... do you remember how good it was?’

‘Of course.’

‘You’ll look at the stars at night. Mine’s too small to show you. It’s better that way. For you, my star will be just one of the stars. So you’ll love looking at *all* the stars. They’ll all be your friends. And now I’m going to give you a present...’

And he laughed again.

‘Ah, young man, young man, how I love to hear that laugh!’

‘Exactly. That’s my present. It’ll be like the water...’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Stars aren’t the same for everyone. For travellers, they’re guides. For some people, they’re just little lights. For experts, they’re a problem. For my businessman, they were gold. But all these stars are silent. Your stars won’t be like anyone else’s...’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Because I’m living on one of them, because I’m laughing on one of them, when you look at the stars at night it’ll be as if all the stars are laughing. Your stars will laugh!’

And he laughed again.

‘And once you’ve got over it (one always does get over it) you’ll be glad to have known me. You’ll always be my friend. You’ll feel like laughing

with me. And sometimes you'll open your window, just like that, for the sheer pleasure... And your friends will be amazed to see you looking at the sky and laughing. Then you can tell them:

"Yes, the stars always make me laugh!" And they'll think you're mad. I'll have played you a really dirty trick..."

And he laughed again.

'It'll be as if I'd given you a lot of little laughing bells, instead of stars...'

And he laughed again. Then he became serious once more:

'Listen... Don't come... tonight.'

I'm not leaving you alone.'

'It'll seem as if it hurts... It'll seem as if I'm dying. That's how it is. Don't come and see that. Don't bother...'

'I'm not leaving you alone.'

But he was worried.

'I'm telling you this because of the snake too. You mustn't get bitten. Snakes are nasty. They can bite just for the fun of it...'

'I'm not leaving you alone.'

But something calmed his fears:

'It's true, they don't have enough venom for a second bite...'

I didn't see him set out that night. He slipped away silently. When I managed to catch up with him he was walking resolutely and fast. All he said was:

'Oh, it's you.'

And he took my hand. But he was still upset:

'You were wrong to come. You'll be hurt. It'll seem as if I'm dead and it won't be true...'

I kept quiet.

'You see, it's too far. I can't take this body. It's too heavy.'

I kept quiet.

'But it'll be like an old empty shell. There's nothing sad about old empty shells...'

I kept quiet.

He lost heart a little. But then made another effort:

'It'll be nice, you know. I'll look at the stars too. They'll all be wells with rusty pulleys. I'll be able to drink from all of them...'

I kept quiet.

'It'll be fun! You'll have five hundred million bells and I'll have five hundred million wells...'

Then he went quiet too because he was crying.

'This is it. Let me do a step on my own.'



And he sat down because he was afraid.

Then he said:

'You know... I'm responsible for that flower! And she's so weak! And she's so simple. She's only got four useless thorns to protect her against the world...'

I sat down too because I couldn't stand any longer. He said:

'Well... this is it...'

He hesitated another moment, then got up. He stepped forward. I couldn't move.



There was no more than a flash of yellow near his ankle. He remained still for a moment. He didn't scream. He fell gently down, like a tree. It didn't even make a sound, because of the sand.

XXVII

Of course, that was already six years ago now... I've never told this story before. My friends were really pleased to discover I was alive. I was sad, but I told them: 'I'm just tired...'

I have got over it a bit now. Well... not quite. But I'm sure he got back to his planet, for I couldn't find his body at daybreak. It wasn't such a heavy body... And at night I love listening to the stars. Like five hundred million bells...

But there's one extraordinary thing. I forgot to draw a leather strap on the little prince's muzzle! He won't ever have been able to strap it on to the sheep. So I keep wondering: 'What's happened on his planet? Perhaps the sheep's already eaten the flower...'

Sometimes I think: 'Of course it hasn't! The little prince covers his flower every night with the glass globe and keeps a watchful eye over his sheep...' Then I'm happy. And the stars laugh gently.

Sometimes I think: 'You've only got to forget for a second! That's all it takes! One evening he'll have forgotten the glass globe, or the sheep will have got out in the night without making a sound...' Then all the bells change into tears...!



He fell gently down, like a tree.

It's a real puzzle. For those of you who love the little prince, like me, nothing in the universe is the same if somewhere, who knows where? an unknown sheep has or hasn't eaten a rose...

Look up at the sky. Ask yourself if the sheep has eaten the flower or not, and you'll see how everything changes...

And no grown up will ever understand how important this is!



For me this is the most beautiful and the saddest landscape in the world. It's the same as the previous page but I drew it again to show it to you properly. This is the spot where the little prince appeared on Earth, then disappeared. Look at this landscape carefully so you can be sure of recognizing it again if you're ever travelling in Africa, in the desert. And if it ever happens that you pass this spot, I beg you, don't hurry by, but wait around awhile beneath the star. And if a laughing child comes up to you, if he has golden hair, if he never answers questions, you'll know who it is. Then, be kind! Don't leave me in misery. Write to me at once to tell me he's back....

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