



ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

# The Little Prince



A NEW  
TRANSLATION  
OF THE BELOVED  
CLASSIC WITH  
RESTORED  
ORIGINAL ART

# The Little Prince



*Books by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*

SOUTHERN MAIL  
NIGHT FLIGHT  
WIND, SAND AND STARS  
FLIGHT TO ARRAS  
LETTER TO A HOSTAGE  
THE LITTLE PRINCE  
THE WISDOM OF THE SANDS  
WARTIME WRITINGS 1939–1944  
AIRMAN'S ODYSSEY



*In order to make his escape, I believe he took advantage  
of a migration of wild birds.*

# The Little Prince

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY



TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY RICHARD HOWARD



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Summary: An aviator whose plane is forced down in the Sahara Desert encounters a little prince from a small planet, who relates his adventures in seeking the secret of what is important in life.

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## TO LEON WERTH

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

## TO LEON WERTH

WHEN HE WAS A LITTLE BOY



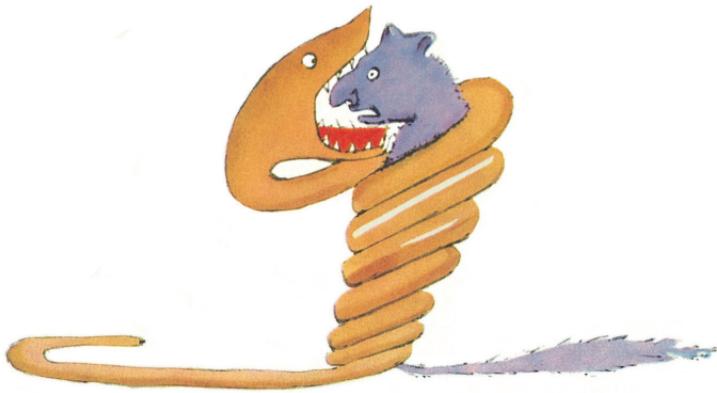
# The Little Prince

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

In April 1943, *Le Petit Prince* was published in New York, a year before Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was shot down over the Mediterranean by German reconnaissance planes. The English translation, by Katherine Woods, was copyrighted the same year, and the work was dedicated in that translation to “the child who became Leon Werth. All grown-ups were once children—although few of them remember it.”

As in the case of contemporaries like Mann and Gide (the latter a great admirer of Saint-Exupéry), new versions of “canonical” translations raise questions (or at least suspicions) of lèse-majesté. A second translator into English of *The Little Prince* accepts the responsibility of such an imputation, for it must be acknowledged that all translations date; certain works never do. A new version of a work fifty-seven years old is entitled and, indeed, is obliged to persist further in the letter of that work. Each decade has its circumlocutions, its compliances; the translator seeks these out, as we see in Ms. Woods’s pioneer endeavors, falls back on period makeshifts rather than confronting the often radical outrage of what the author, in his incomparable originality, ventures to say. The translator, it is seen in the fullness of time, so rarely *ventures* in this fashion, but rather falls back, as I say. It is the peculiar privilege of the next translator, in his own day and age, to sally forth, to be inordinate instead of placating or merely plausible. Time reveals all translation to be paraphrase, and it is in the longing for a *standard version* of a “beloved” work that we must begin again, we translators—that we must overtake one another.

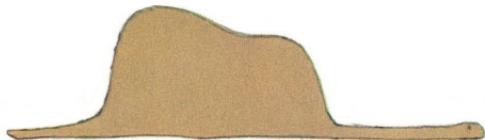
R. H.  
June 2000



O NCE WHEN I WAS six I saw a magnificent picture in a book about the jungle, called *True Stories*. It showed a boa 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. Afterward they are no longer able to move, and they sleep during the six months of their digestion."

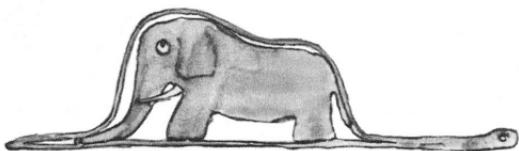
In those days I thought a lot about jungle adventures, and eventually managed to make my first drawing, using a colored pencil. My drawing Number One looked like this:



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

They answered, "Why be scared of a hat?"

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



The grown-ups advised me to put away my drawings of boa constrictors, outside or inside, and apply myself instead to geography, history, arithmetic, and grammar. That is why I abandoned, at the age of six, a magnificent career as an artist. I had been discouraged by the failure of my drawing Number One and of my drawing Number Two. Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is exhausting for children to have to provide explanations over and over again.

So then I had to choose another career, and I learned to pilot airplanes. I have flown almost everywhere in the world. And, as a matter of fact, geography has been a big help to me. I could tell China from Arizona at first glance, which is very useful if you get lost during the night.

So I have had, in the course of my life, lots of encounters with lots of serious people. I have spent lots

of time with grown-ups. I have seen them at close range . . . which hasn't much improved my opinion of them.

Whenever I encountered a grown-up who seemed to me at all enlightened, I would experiment on him with my drawing Number One, which I have always kept. I wanted to see if he really understood anything. But he would always answer, "That's a hat." Then I wouldn't talk about boa constrictors or jungles or stars. I would put myself on his level and talk about bridge and golf and politics and neckties. And my grown-up was glad to know such a reasonable person.

## II

SO I LIVED all alone, without anyone I could really talk to, until I had to make a crash landing in the Sahara Desert six years ago. Something in my plane's engine had broken, and since I had neither a mechanic nor passengers in the plane with me, I was preparing to undertake the difficult repair job by myself. For me it was a matter of life or death: I had only enough drinking water for eight days.

The first night, then, I went to sleep on the sand a thousand miles from any inhabited country. I was more isolated than a man shipwrecked on a raft in the middle of the ocean. So you can imagine my surprise when I was awakened at daybreak by a funny little voice saying, "Please . . . draw me a sheep . . ."

"What?"

"Draw me a sheep . . ."

I leaped up as if I had been struck by lightning. I rubbed my eyes hard. I stared. And I saw an extraordinary little fellow staring back at me very seriously. Here is the best portrait I managed to make of him, later on. But of course my drawing is much less attractive than my model. This is not my fault. My career as a painter was discouraged at the age of six by the grown-ups, and I had never learned to draw anything except boa constrictors, outside and inside.

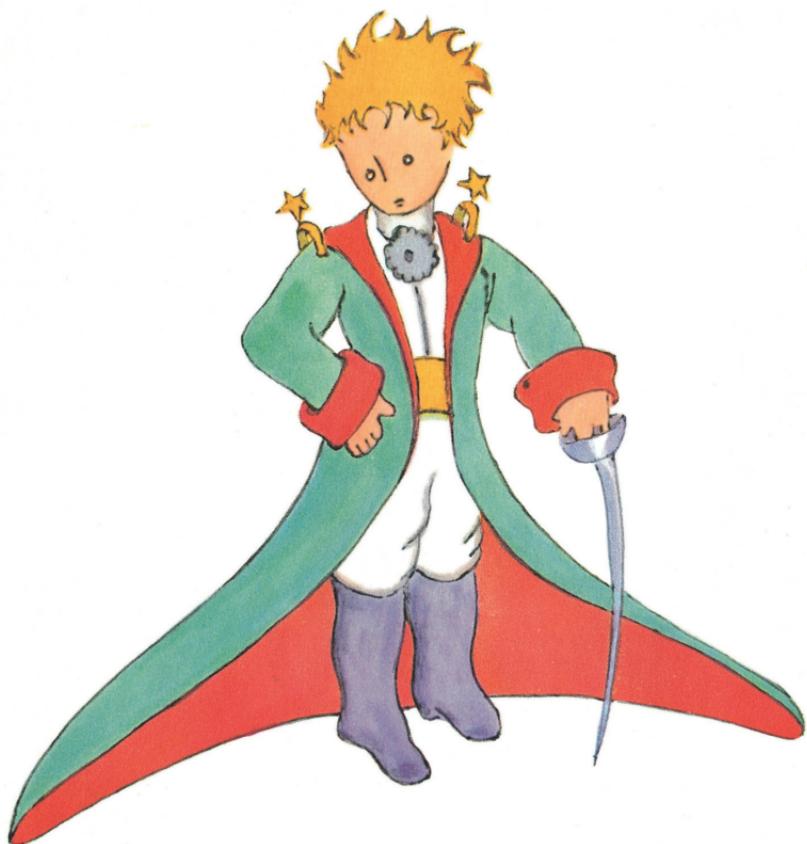
So I stared wide-eyed at this apparition. Don't forget that I was a thousand miles from any inhabited territory. Yet this little fellow seemed to be neither lost nor dying of exhaustion, hunger, or thirst; nor did he seem scared to death. There was nothing in his appearance that suggested a child lost in the middle of the desert a thousand miles from any inhabited territory. When I finally managed to speak, I asked him, "But . . . what are you doing here?"

And then he repeated, very slowly and very seriously, "Please . . . draw me a sheep . . ."

In the face of an overpowering mystery, you don't dare disobey. Absurd as it seemed, a thousand miles from all inhabited regions and in danger of death, I took a scrap of paper and a pen out of my pocket. But then I remembered that I had mostly studied geography, history, arithmetic, and grammar, and I told the little fellow (rather crossly) that I didn't know how to draw.

He replied, "That doesn't matter. Draw me a sheep."

Since I had never drawn a sheep, I made him one of



*Here is the best portrait I managed to make of him, later on.*



the only two drawings I knew how to make—the one of the boa constrictor from outside. And I was astounded to hear the little fellow answer:

“No! No! I don’t want an elephant inside a boa constrictor. A boa constrictor is very dangerous, and an elephant would get in the way. Where I live, everything is very small. I need a sheep. Draw me a sheep.”

So then I made a drawing.

He looked at it carefully, and then said, “No. This one is already quite sick. Make another.”

I made another drawing. My friend gave me a kind, indulgent smile:

“You can see for yourself . . . that’s not a sheep, it’s a ram. It has horns . . .”

So I made my third drawing, but it was rejected, like the others:

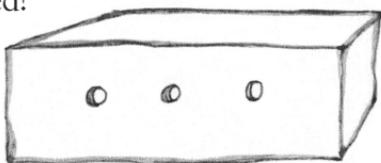
“This one’s too old. I want a sheep that will live a long time.”

So then, impatiently, since I was in a hurry to start work on my engine, I scribbled this drawing, and added, “This is just the crate. The sheep you want is inside.”

But I was amazed to see my young critic’s face light up. “That’s just the kind I wanted!

Do you think this sheep will need a lot of grass?”

“Why?”



"Because where I live, everything is very small . . ."

"There's sure to be enough. I've given you a very small sheep."

He bent over the drawing. "Not so small as all that . . . Look! He's gone to sleep . . ."

And that's how I made the acquaintance of the little prince.

### III

IT TOOK ME a long time to understand where he came from. The little prince, who asked me so many questions, never seemed to hear the ones I asked him. It was things he said quite at random that, bit by bit, explained everything. For instance, when he first caught sight of my airplane (I won't draw my airplane; that would be much too complicated for me) he asked:

"What's that thing over there?"

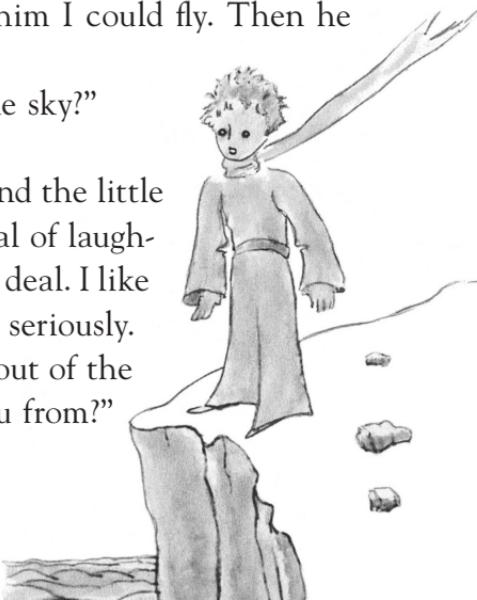
"It's not a thing. It flies. It's an airplane. My airplane."

And I was proud to tell him I could fly. Then he exclaimed:

"What! You fell out of the sky?"

"Yes," I said modestly.

"Oh! That's funny . . ." And the little prince broke into a lovely peal of laughter, which annoyed me a good deal. I like my misfortunes to be taken seriously. Then he added, "So you fell out of the sky, too. What planet are you from?"



That was when I had the first clue to the mystery of his presence, and I questioned him sharply. “Do you come from another planet?”

But he made no answer. He shook his head a little, still staring at my airplane. “Of course, that couldn’t have brought you from very far . . .” And he fell into a reverie that lasted a long while. Then, taking my sheep out of his pocket, he plunged into contemplation of his treasure.

YOU CAN IMAGINE how intrigued I was by this hint about “other planets.” I tried to learn more: “Where do you come from, little fellow? Where is this ‘where I live’ of yours? Where will you be taking my sheep?”

After a thoughtful silence he answered, “The good thing about the crate you’ve given me is that he can use it for a house after dark.”

“Of course. And if you’re good, I’ll give you a rope to tie him up during the day. And a stake to tie him to.” This proposition seemed to shock the little prince.

“Tie him up? What a funny idea!”

“But if you don’t tie him up, he’ll wander off somewhere and get lost.”

My friend burst out laughing again. “Where could he go?”

“Anywhere. Straight ahead . . .”

Then the little prince remarked quite seriously, “Even if he did, everything’s so small where I live!” And he added, perhaps a little sadly, “Straight ahead, you can’t go very far.”

## IV

THAT WAS HOW I had learned a second very important thing, which was that the planet he came from was hardly bigger than a house!

That couldn't surprise me much. I knew very well that except for the huge planets like Earth, Jupiter, Mars, and Venus, which have been given names, there are hundreds of others that are sometimes so small that it's very difficult to see them through a telescope. When an astronomer discovers one of them, he gives it a number

instead of a name.

For instance, he would call it "Asteroid 325."

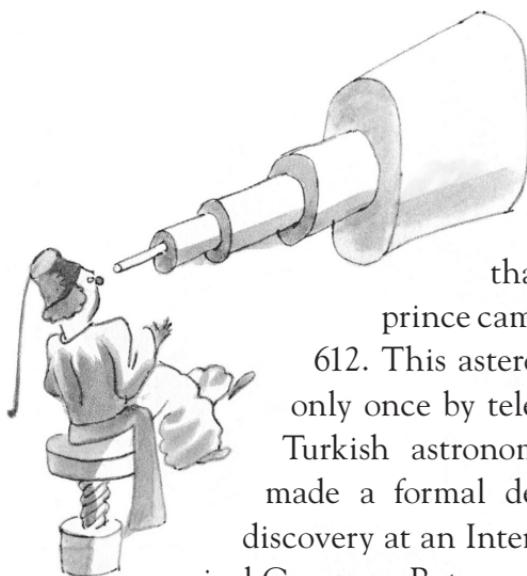
I have serious reasons to believe that the planet the little

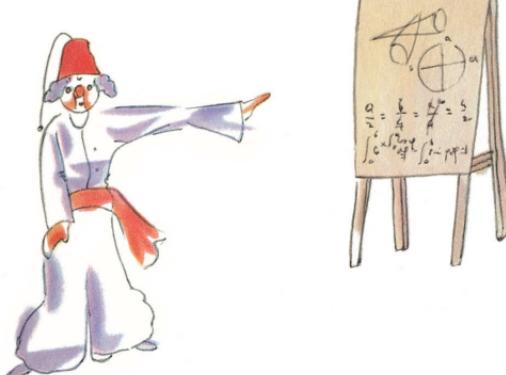
prince came from is Asteroid B-

612. This asteroid has been sighted only once by telescope, in 1909 by a Turkish astronomer, who had then made a formal demonstration of his discovery at an International Astronomical Congress. But no one had believed him

on account of the way he was dressed. Grown-ups are like that.

Fortunately for the reputation of Asteroid B-612, a Turkish dictator ordered his people, on pain of death, to wear European clothes. The astronomer repeated his





demonstration in 1920, wearing a very elegant suit. And this time everyone believed him.

If I've told you these details about Asteroid B-612 and if I've given you its number, it is on account of the grown-ups. Grown-ups like numbers. When you tell them about a new friend, they never ask questions about what really matters. They never ask: "What does his voice sound like?" "What games does he like best?" "Does he collect butterflies?" They ask: "How old is he?" "How many brothers does he have?" "How much does he weigh?" "How much money does his father make?" Only then do they think they know him. If you tell grown-ups, "I saw a beautiful red brick house, with geraniums at the windows and doves on the roof . . . , " they won't be able to imagine such a house. You have to tell them, "I saw a house worth a hundred thousand francs." Then they exclaim, "What a pretty house!"





*The Little Prince on Asteroid B-612*

So if you tell them: “The proof of the little prince’s existence is that he was delightful, that he laughed, and that he wanted a sheep. When someone wants a sheep, that proves he exists,” they shrug their shoulders and treat you like a child! But if you tell them, “The planet he came from is Asteroid B-612,” then they’ll be convinced, and they won’t bother you with their questions. That’s the way they are. You must not hold it against them. Children should be very understanding of grown-ups.

But, of course, those of us who understand life couldn’t care less about numbers! I should have liked to begin this story like a fairy tale. I should have liked to say:

“Once upon a time there was a little prince who lived on a planet hardly any bigger than he was, and who needed a friend . . .” For those who understand life, that would sound much truer.

The fact is, I don’t want my book to be taken lightly. Telling these memories is so painful for me. It’s already been six years since my friend went away, taking his sheep with him. If I try to describe him here, it’s so I won’t forget him. It’s sad to forget a friend. Not everyone has had a friend. And I might become like the grown-ups who are no longer interested in anything but numbers. Which is still another reason why I’ve bought a box of paints and some pencils. It’s hard to go back to drawing, at my age, when you’ve never made any attempts since the one of a boa from inside and the one of a boa from outside, at the age of six! I’ll certainly

try to make my portraits as true to life as possible. But I'm not entirely sure of succeeding. One drawing works, and the next no longer bears any resemblance. And I'm a little off on his height, too. In this one the little prince is too tall. And here he's too short. And I'm uncertain about the color of his suit. So I grope in one direction and another, as best I can. In the end, I'm sure to get certain more important details all wrong. But here you'll have to forgive me. My friend never explained anything. Perhaps he thought I was like himself. But I, unfortunately, cannot see a sheep through the sides of a crate. I may be a little like the grown-ups. I must have grown old.

## V

EVERY DAY I'D LEARN something about the little prince's planet, about his departure, about his journey. It would come quite gradually, in the course of his remarks. This was how I learned, on the third day, about the drama of the baobabs.

This time, too, I had the sheep to thank, for suddenly the little prince asked me a question, as if overcome by a grave doubt.

“Isn’t it true that sheep eat bushes?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“Ah! I’m glad.”

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

“And therefore they eat baobabs, too?”

I pointed out to the little prince that baobabs are not bushes but trees as tall as churches, and that even if he took a whole herd of elephants back to his planet, that herd couldn't finish off a single baobab.

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

"We'd have to pile them on top of one another."

But he observed perceptively:

"Before they grow big, baobabs start out by being little."

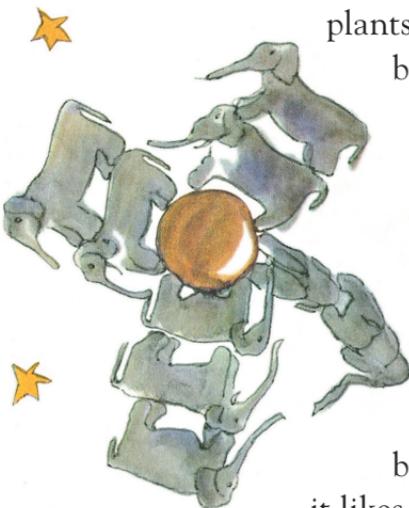
"True enough! But why do you want your sheep to eat little baobabs?"

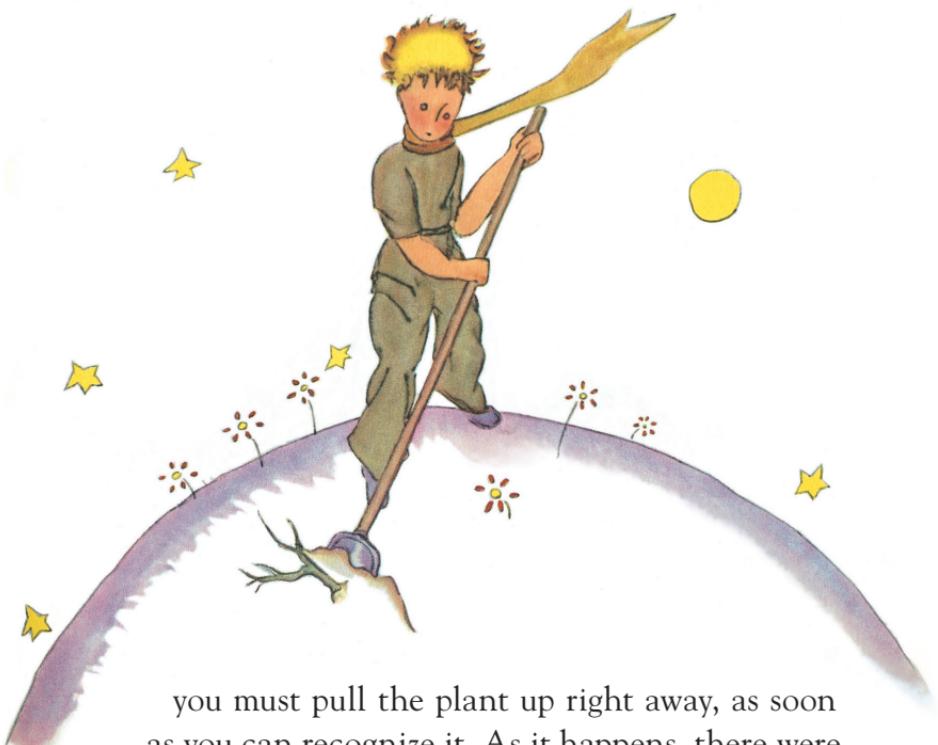
He answered, "Oh, come on! You know!" as if we were talking about something quite obvious. And I was forced to make a great mental effort to understand this problem all by myself.

And, in fact, on the little prince's planet there were—as on all planets—good plants and bad plants. The good

plants come from good seeds, and the  
bad plants from bad seeds. But the  
seeds are invisible. They sleep in  
the secrecy of the ground until

one of them decides to wake  
up. Then it stretches and be-  
gins to sprout, quite timidly  
at first, a charming, harmless  
little twig reaching toward the  
sun. If it's a radish seed, or a rose  
bush seed, you can let it sprout all  
it likes. But if it's the seed of a bad plant





you must pull the plant up right away, as soon as you can recognize it. As it happens, there were terrible seeds on the little prince's planet . . . baobab seeds. The planet's soil was infested with them. Now if you attend to a baobab too late, you can never get rid of it again. It overgrows the whole planet. Its roots pierce right through. And if the planet is too small, and if there are too many baobabs, they make it burst into pieces.

"It's a question of discipline," the little prince told me later on. "When you've finished washing and dressing each morning, you must tend your planet. You must be sure you pull up the baobabs regularly, as soon as you can tell them apart from the rosebushes, which they closely resemble when they're very young. It's very tedious work, but very easy."

And one day he advised me to do my best to make a beautiful drawing, for the edification of the children where I live. “If they travel someday,” he told me, “it could be useful to them. Sometimes there’s no harm in postponing your work until later. But with baobabs, it’s always a catastrophe. I knew one planet that was inhabited by a lazy man. He had neglected three bushes . . .”

So, following the little prince’s instructions, I have drawn that planet. I don’t much like assuming the tone of a moralist. But the danger of baobabs is so little recognized, and the risks run by anyone who might get lost on an asteroid are so considerable, that for once I am making an exception to my habitual reserve. I say, “Children, watch out for baobabs!” It’s to warn my friends of a danger of which they, like myself, have long been unaware that I worked so hard on this drawing. The lesson I’m teaching is worth the trouble. You may be asking, “Why are there no other drawings in this book as big as the drawing of the baobabs?” There’s a simple answer: I tried but I couldn’t manage it. When I drew the baobabs, I was inspired by a sense of urgency.

## VI

O LITTLE PRINCE! Gradually, this was how I came to understand your sad little life. For a long time your only entertainment was the pleasure of sunsets. I learned this new detail on the morning of the fourth day, when you told me:



*The Baobabs*



"I really like sunsets. Let's go look at one now . . ."

"But we have to wait . . ."

"What for?"

"For the sun to set."

At first you seemed quite surprised, and then you laughed at yourself. And you said to me, "I think I'm still at home!"

Indeed. When it's noon in the United States, the sun, as everyone knows, is setting over France. If you could fly to France in one minute, you could watch the sunset. Unfortunately France is much too far.

But on your tiny planet, all you had to do was move your chair a few feet. And you would watch the twilight whenever you wanted to. . . .

“One day I saw the sun set forty-four times!” And a little later you added, “You know, when you’re feeling very sad, sunsets are wonderful . . .”

“On the day of the forty-four times, were you feeling very sad?”

But the little prince didn’t answer.

## VII

ON THE FIFTH DAY, thanks again to the sheep, another secret of the little prince’s life was revealed to me. Abruptly, with no preamble, he asked me, as if it were the fruit of a problem long pondered in silence:

“If a sheep eats bushes, does it eat flowers, too?”

“A sheep eats whatever it finds.”

“Even flowers that have thorns?”

“Yes. Even flowers that have thorns.”

“Then what good are thorns?”

I didn’t know. At that moment I was very busy trying to unscrew a bolt that was jammed in my engine. I was quite worried, for my plane crash was beginning to seem extremely serious, and the lack of drinking water made me fear the worst.

“What good are thorns?”

The little prince never let go of a question once he had asked it. I was annoyed by my jammed bolt, and I answered without thinking.

“Thorns are no good for anything—they’re just the flowers’ way of being mean!”

“Oh!” But after a silence, he lashed out at me, with

a sort of bitterness. "I don't believe you! Flowers are weak. They're naive. They reassure themselves whatever way they can. They believe their thorns make them frightening.

I made no answer. At that moment I was thinking,  
*If this bolt stays jammed, I'll knock it off with the hammer.*  
Again the little prince disturbed my reflections.

"Then you think flowers . . ."

"No, not at all. I don't think anything! I just said whatever came into my head. I'm busy here with something serious!"

He stared at me, astounded.

"Something serious'!"

He saw me holding my hammer, my fingers black with grease, bending over an object he regarded as very ugly.

"You talk like the grown-ups!"

That made me a little ashamed. But he added, mercilessly:

"You confuse everything . . . You've got it all mixed up!" He was really very annoyed. He tossed his golden curls in the wind. "I know a planet inhabited by a red-faced gentleman. He's never smelled a flower. He's never looked at a star. He's never loved anyone. He's never done anything except add up numbers. And all day long he says over and over, just like you, 'I'm a serious man! I'm a serious man!' And that puffs him up with pride. But he's not a man at all—he's a mushroom!"

"He's a what?"

"A mushroom!" The little prince was now quite pale with rage. "For millions of years flowers have been pro-

ducing thorns. For millions of years sheep have been eating them all the same. And it's not serious, trying to understand why flowers go to such trouble to produce thorns that are good for nothing? It's not important, the war between the sheep and the flowers? It's no more serious and more important than the numbers that fat red gentleman is adding up? Suppose I happen to know a unique flower, one that exists nowhere in the world except on my planet, one that a little sheep can wipe out in a single bite one morning, just like that, without even realizing what he's doing—that isn't important?" His face turned red now, and he went on. "If someone loves a flower of which just one example exists among all the millions and millions of stars, that's enough to make him happy when he looks at the stars. He tells himself, 'My flower's up there somewhere . . .' But if the sheep eats the flower, then for him it's as if, suddenly, all the stars went out. And that isn't important?"

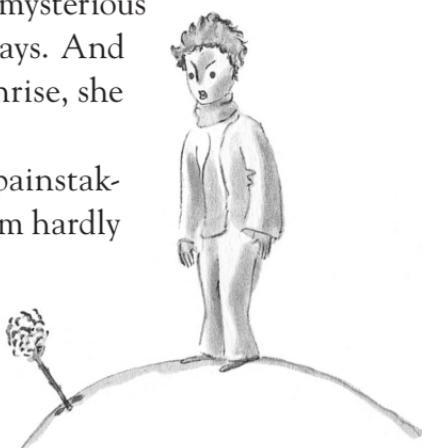
He couldn't say another word. All of a sudden he burst out sobbing. Night had fallen. I dropped my tools. What did I care about my hammer, about my bolt, about thirst and death? There was, on one star, on one planet, on mine, the Earth, a little prince to be consoled! I took him in my arms. I rocked him. I told him, "The flower you love is not in danger . . . I'll draw you a muzzle for your sheep . . . I'll draw you a fence for your flower . . . I . . ." I didn't know what to say. How clumsy I felt! I didn't know how to reach him, where to find him. . . . It's so mysterious, the land of tears.



## VIII

I SOON LEARNED to know that flower better. On the little prince's planet, there had always been very simple flowers, decorated with a single row of petals so that they took up no room at all and got in no one's way. They would appear one morning in the grass, and would fade by nightfall. But this one had grown from a seed brought from who knows where, and the little prince had kept a close watch over a sprout that was not like any of the others. It might have been a new kind of baobab. But the sprout soon stopped growing and began to show signs of blossoming. The little prince, who had watched the development of an enormous bud, realized that some sort of miraculous apparition would emerge from it, but the flower continued her beauty preparations in the shelter of her green chamber, selecting her colors with the greatest care and dressing quite deliberately, adjusting her petals one by one. She had no desire to emerge all rumpled, like the poppies. She wished to appear only in the full radiance of her beauty. Oh yes, she was quite vain! And her mysterious adornment had lasted days and days. And then one morning, precisely at sunrise, she showed herself.

And after having labored so painstakingly, she yawned and said, "Ah! I'm hardly awake . . . Forgive me . . . I'm still all untidy . . ."



But the little prince couldn't contain his admiration.

"How lovely you are!"

"Aren't I?" the flower answered sweetly. "And I was born the same time as the sun . . ."

The little prince realized that she wasn't any too modest, but she was so dazzling!

"I believe it is breakfast time," she had soon added.  
"Would you be so kind as to tend to me?"

And the little prince, utterly abashed, having gone to look for a watering can, served the flower.

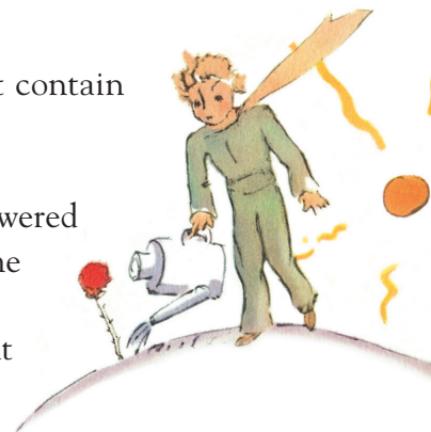
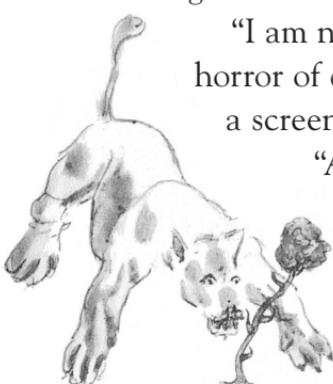
SHE HAD SOON begun tormenting him with her rather touchy vanity. One day, for instance, alluding to her four thorns, she remarked to the little prince, "I'm ready for tigers, with all their claws!"

"There are no tigers on my planet," the little prince had objected, "and besides, tigers don't eat weeds."

"I am not a weed," the flower sweetly replied.  
"Forgive me . . ."

"I am not at all afraid of tigers, but I have a horror of drafts. You wouldn't happen to have a screen?"

"A horror of drafts . . . that's not a good sign, for a plant," the little prince had observed. "How complicated this flower is . . ."





"After dark you will put me under glass. How cold it is where you live—quite uncomfortable. Where I come from—"

But she suddenly broke off. She had come here as a seed. She couldn't have known anything of other worlds.

Humiliated at having let herself be caught on the verge of so naive a lie, she coughed two or three times in order to put the little prince in the wrong. "That screen?"

"I was going to look for one, but you were speaking to me!"

Then she made herself cough again, in order to inflict a twinge of remorse on him all the same.

SO THE LITTLE PRINCE, despite all the goodwill of his love, had soon come to mistrust her. He had taken seriously certain inconsequential remarks and had grown very unhappy.

"I shouldn't have listened to her," he confided to me one day. "You must never listen to flowers. You must look at them and smell them. Mine perfumed my planet, but I didn't know how to enjoy that. The business about the tiger claws, instead of annoying me, ought to have moved me . . ."

And he confided further, "In those days, I didn't understand anything. I should have judged her according to her actions, not her words. She perfumed my planet and lit up my life. I should never have run away!"

I ought to have realized the tenderness underlying her silly pretensions. Flowers are so contradictory! But I was too young to know how to love her."

## IX

IN ORDER TO make his escape, I believe he took advantage of a migration of wild birds. On the morning of his departure, he put his planet in order. He carefully raked out his active volcanoes. The little prince possessed two active volcanoes, which were very convenient for warming his breakfast. He also possessed one extinct volcano. But, as he said, "You never know!" So he raked out the extinct volcano, too. If they are properly raked out, volcanoes burn gently and regularly, without eruptions. Volcanic eruptions are like fires in a chimney. Of course, on our Earth we are much too small to rake out our volcanoes. That is why they cause us so much trouble.

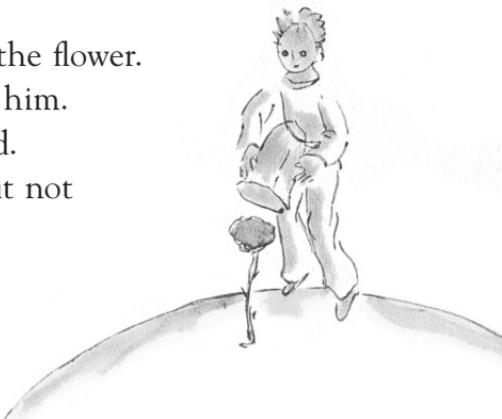
The little prince also uprooted, a little sadly, the last baobab shoots. He believed he would never be coming back. But all these familiar tasks seemed very sweet to him on this last morning. And when he watered the flower one last time, and put her under glass, he felt like crying.

"Good-bye," he said to the flower.

But she did not answer him.

"Good-bye," he repeated.

The flower coughed. But not because she had a cold.





*He carefully raked out his active volcanoes.*

"I've been silly," she told him at last. "I ask your forgiveness. Try to be happy."

He was surprised that there were no reproaches. He stood there, quite bewildered, holding the glass bell in midair. He failed to understand this calm sweetness.

"Of course I love you," the flower told him. "It was my fault you never knew. It doesn't matter. But you were just as silly as I was. Try to be happy . . . Put that glass thing down. I don't want it anymore."

"But the wind . . ."

"My cold isn't that bad . . . The night air will do me good. I'm a flower."

"But the animals . . ."

"I need to put up with two or three caterpillars if I want to get to know the butterflies. Apparently they're very beautiful. Otherwise who will visit me? You'll be far away. As for the big animals, I'm not afraid of them. I have my own claws." And she naively showed her four thorns. Then she added, "Don't hang around like this; it's irritating. You made up your mind to leave. Now go."

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

## X

HE HAPPENED TO BE in the vicinity of Asteroids 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, and 330. So he began by visiting them, to keep himself busy and to learn something.



The first one was inhabited by a king. Wearing purple and ermine, he was sitting on a simple yet majestic throne.

“Ah! Here’s a subject!” the king exclaimed when he caught sight of the little prince.

And the little prince wondered, *How can he know who I am if he’s never seen me before!* He didn’t realize that for kings, the world is extremely simplified: All men are subjects.

"Approach the throne so I can get a better look at you," said the king, very proud of being a king for someone at last.

The little prince looked around for a place to sit down, but the planet was covered by the magnificent ermine cloak. So he remained standing, and since he was tired, he yawned.

"It is a violation of etiquette to yawn in a king's presence," the monarch told him. "I forbid you to do so."

"I can't help it," answered the little prince, quite embarrassed. "I've made a long journey, and I haven't had any sleep . . ."

"Then I command you to yawn," said the king. "I haven't seen anyone yawn for years. For me, yawns are a curiosity. Come on, yawn again! It is an order."

"That intimidates me . . . I can't do it now," said the little prince, blushing deeply.

"Well, well!" the king replied. "Then I . . . I command you to yawn sometimes and sometimes to . . ."

He was sputtering a little, and seemed annoyed.

For the king insisted that his authority be universally respected. He would tolerate no disobedience, being an absolute monarch. But since he was a kindly man, all his commands were reasonable. "If I were to command," he would often say, "if I were to command a general to turn into a seagull, and if the general did not obey, that would not be the general's fault. It would be mine."

"May I sit down?" the little prince timidly inquired.

"I command you to sit down," the king replied, majestically gathering up a fold of his ermine robe.

But the little prince was wondering. The planet was tiny. Over what could the king really reign? "Sire . . .," he ventured, "excuse me for asking . . ."

"I command you to ask," the king hastened to say.

"Sire . . . over what do you reign?"

"Over everything," the king answered, with great simplicity.

"Over everything?"

With a discreet gesture the king pointed to his planet, to the other planets, and to the stars.

"Over all that?" asked the little prince.

"Over all that . . .," the king answered.

For not only was he an absolute monarch, but a universal monarch as well.

"And do the stars obey you?"

"Of course," the king replied. "They obey immediately. I tolerate no insubordination."

Such power amazed the little prince. If he had wielded it himself, he could have watched not forty-four but seventy-two, or even a hundred, even two hundred sunsets on the same day without ever having to move his chair! And since he was feeling rather sad on account of remembering his own little planet, which he had forsaken, he ventured to ask a favor of the king: "I'd like to see a sunset . . . Do me a favor, your majesty . . . Command the sun to set . . ."

"If I commanded a general to fly from one flower to the next like a butterfly, or to write a tragedy, or to turn into a seagull, and if the general did not carry out

my command, which of us would be in the wrong, the general or me?"

"You would be," said the little prince, quite firmly.

"Exactly. One must command from each what each can perform," the king went on. "Authority is based first of all upon reason. If you command your subjects to jump in the ocean, there will be a revolution. I am entitled to command obedience because my orders are reasonable."

"Then my sunset?" insisted the little prince, who never let go of a question once he had asked it.

"You shall have your sunset. I shall command it. But I shall wait, according to my science of government, until conditions are favorable."

"And when will that be?" inquired the little prince.

"Well, well!" replied the king, first consulting a large calendar. "Well, well! That will be around . . . around . . . that will be tonight around seven-forty! And you'll see how well I am obeyed."

The little prince yawned. He was regretting his lost sunset. And besides, he was already growing a little bored. "I have nothing further to do here," he told the king. "I'm going to be on my way!"

"Do not leave!" answered the king, who was so proud of having a subject. "Do not leave; I shall make you my minister!"

"A minister of what?"

"Of . . . of justice!"

"But there's no one here to judge!"

"You never know," the king told him. "I have not yet explored the whole of my realm. I am very old, I have no room for a carriage, and it wearies me to walk."

"Oh, but I've already seen for myself," said the little prince, leaning forward to glance one more time at the other side of the planet. "There's no one over there, either . . ."

"Then you shall pass judgment on yourself," the king answered. "That is the hardest thing of all. It is much harder to judge yourself than to judge others. If you succeed in judging yourself, it's because you are truly a wise man."

"But I can judge myself anywhere," said the little prince. "I don't need to live here."

"Well, well!" the king said. "I have good reason to believe that there is an old rat living somewhere on my planet. I hear him at night. You could judge that old rat. From time to time you will condemn him to death. That way his life will depend on your justice. But you'll pardon him each time for economy's sake. There's only one rat."

"I don't like condemning anyone to death," the little prince said, "and now I think I'll be on my way."

"No," said the king.

The little prince, having completed his preparations, had no desire to aggrieve the old monarch. "If Your Majesty desires to be promptly obeyed, he should give me a reasonable command. He might command me, for instance, to leave before this minute is up. It seems to me that conditions are favorable . . ."

The king having made no answer, the little prince hesitated at first, and then, with a sigh, took his leave.

"I make you my ambassador," the king hastily shouted after him. He had a great air of authority.

"Grown-ups are so strange," the little prince said to himself as he went on his way.

## XI

THE SECOND PLANET was inhabited by a very vain man.

"Ah! A visit from an admirer!" he exclaimed when he caught sight of the little prince, still at some distance. To vain men, other people are admirers.

"Hello," said the little prince. "That's a funny hat you're wearing."

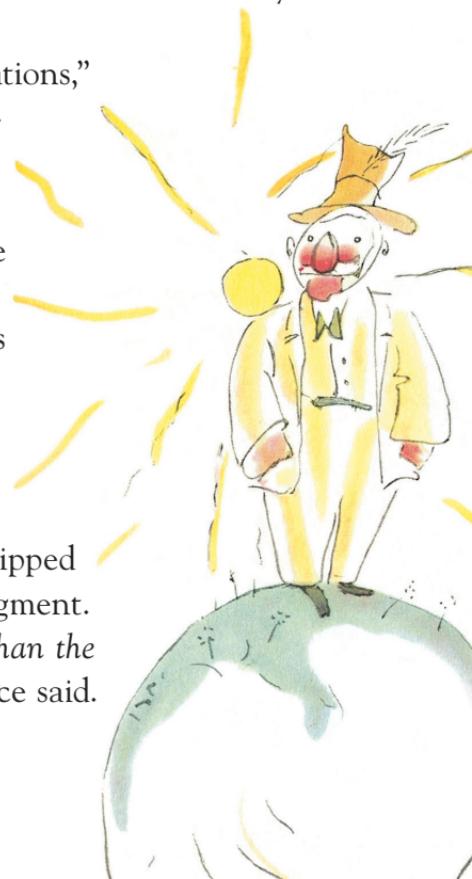
"It's for answering acclamations,"  
the very vain man replied. "Unfortunately, no one ever comes  
this way."

"Is that so?" said the little prince, who did not understand what the vain man was talking about.

"Clap your hands,  
directed the man.

The little prince clapped his hands, and the vain man tipped his hat in modest acknowledgment.

*This is more entertaining than the visit to the king,* the little prince said.



to himself. And he continued clapping. The very vain man continued tipping his hat in acknowledgment.

After five minutes of this exercise, the little prince tired of the game's monotony. "And what would make the hat fall off?" he asked.

But the vain man did not hear him. Vain men never hear anything but praise.

"Do you really admire me a great deal?" he asked the little prince.

"What does that mean—*admire*?"

"To *admire* means to acknowledge that I am the handsomest, the best-dressed, the richest, and the most intelligent man on the planet."

"But you're the only man on your planet!"

"Do me this favor. Admire me all the same."

"I admire you," said the little prince, with a little shrug of his shoulders, "but what is there about my admiration that interests you so much?" And the little prince went on his way.

"Grown-ups are certainly very strange," he said to himself as he continued on his journey.

## XII

THE NEXT PLANET was inhabited by a drunkard. This visit was a very brief one, but it plunged the little prince into a deep depression.

"What are you doing there?" he asked the drunkard, whom he found sunk in silence before a collection of empty bottles and a collection of full ones.



"Drinking," replied the drunkard, with a gloomy expression.

"Why are you drinking?" the little prince asked.

"To forget," replied the drunkard.

"To forget what?" inquired the little prince, who was already feeling sorry for him.

"To forget that I'm ashamed," confessed the drunkard, hanging his head.

"What are you ashamed of?" inquired the little prince, who wanted to help.

"Of drinking!" concluded the drunkard, withdrawing into silence for good. And the little prince went on his way, puzzled.



"Grown-ups are certainly very, very strange," he said to himself as he continued on his journey.

### XIII

THE FOURTH PLANET belonged to a businessman. This person was so busy that he didn't even raise his head when the little prince arrived.

"Hello," said the little prince. "Your cigarette's gone out."

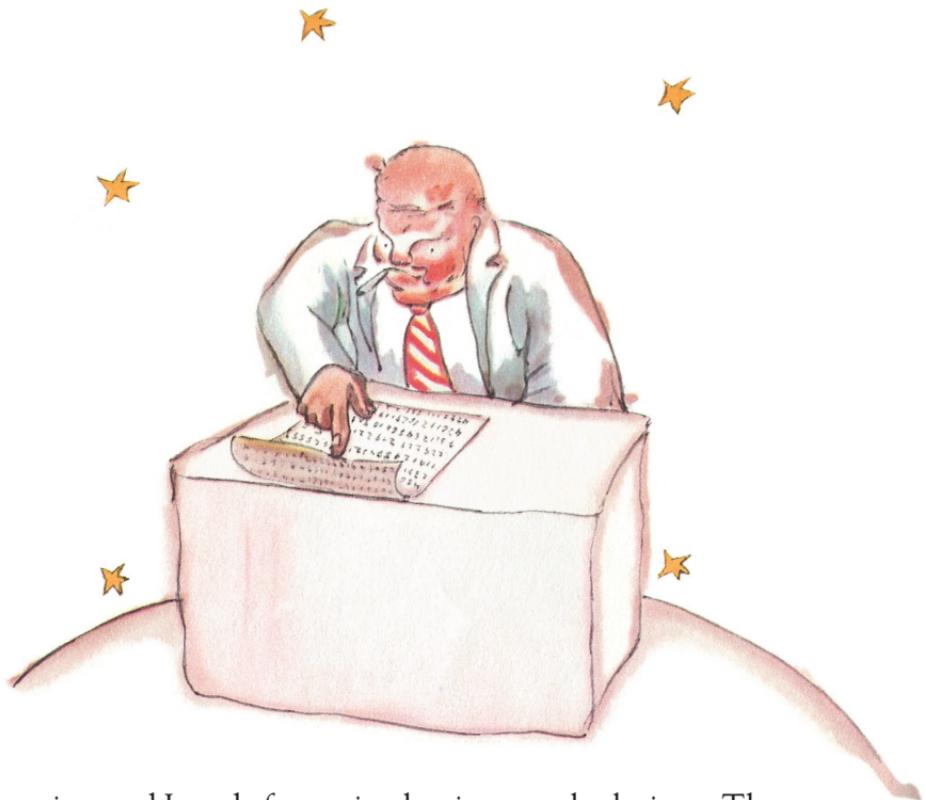
"Three and two make five. Five and seven, twelve. Twelve and three, fifteen. Hello. Fifteen and seven, twenty-two. Twenty-two and six, twenty-eight. No time to light it again. Twenty-six and five, thirty-one. Whew! That amounts to five-hundred-and-one million, six-hundred-twenty-two thousand, seven hundred thirty-one."

"Five-hundred million what?"

"Hmm? You're still there? Five-hundred-and-one million . . . I don't remember . . . I have so much work to do! I'm a serious man. I can't be bothered with trifles! Two and five, seven . . ."

"Five-hundred-and-one million what?" repeated the little prince, who had never in his life let go of a question once he had asked it.

The businessman raised his head. "For the fifty-four years I've inhabited this planet, I've been interrupted only three times. The first time was twenty-two years ago, when I was interrupted by a beetle that had fallen onto my desk from god knows where. It made a terrible



noise, and I made four mistakes in my calculations. The second time was eleven years ago, when I was interrupted by a fit of rheumatism. I don't get enough exercise. I haven't time to take strolls. I'm a serious person. The third time . . . is right now! Where was I? Five hundred-and-one million . . . ”

“Million what?”

The businessman realized that he had no hope of being left in peace. “Oh, of those little things you sometimes see in the sky.”

“Flies?”

“No, those little shiny things.”

“Bees?”

“No, those little golden things that make lazy people daydream. Now, I’m a serious person. I have no time for daydreaming.”

“Ah! You mean the stars?”

“Yes, that’s it. Stars.”

“And what do you do with five-hundred million stars?”

“Five-hundred-and-one million, six-hundred-twenty-two thousand, seven hundred thirty-one. I’m a serious person, and I’m accurate.”

“And what do you do with those stars?”

“What do I do with them?”

“Yes.”

“Nothing. I own them.”

“You own the stars?”

“Yes.”

“But I’ve already seen a king who—”

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

“And what good does owning the stars do you?”

“It does me the good of being rich.”

“And what good does it do you to be rich?”

“It lets me buy other stars, if somebody discovers them.”

The little prince said to himself, *This man argues a little like my drunkard.* Nevertheless he asked more questions. “How can someone own the stars?”

“To whom do they belong?” retorted the businessman grumpily.

“I don’t know. To nobody.”

“Then they belong to me, because I thought of it first.”

“And that’s all it takes?”

“Of course. When you find a diamond that belongs to nobody in particular, then it’s yours. When you find an island that belongs to nobody in particular, it’s yours. When you’re the first person to have an idea, you patent it and it’s yours. Now I own the stars, since no one before me ever thought of owning them.”

“That’s true enough,” the little prince said. “And what do you do with them?”

“I manage them. I count them and then count them again,” the businessman said. “It’s difficult work. But I’m a serious person!”

The little prince was still not satisfied. “If I own a scarf, I can tie it around my neck and take it away. If I own a flower, I can 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?”

“That means that I write the number of my stars on a slip of paper. And then I lock that slip of paper in a drawer.”

“And that’s all?”

“That’s enough!”

*That’s amusing, thought the little prince. And even poetic. But not very serious.* The little prince had very different ideas about serious things from those of the grown-ups. “I own a flower myself,” he continued, “which I water every day. I own three volcanoes, which

I rake out every week. I even rake out the extinct one. You never know. So it's of some use to my volcanoes, and it's useful to my flower, that I own them. But you're not useful to the stars."

The businessman opened his mouth but found nothing to say in reply, and the little prince went on his way.

"Grown-ups are certainly quite extraordinary" was all he said to himself as he continued on his journey.

## XIV

THE FIFTH PLANET was very strange. It was the smallest of all. There was just enough room for a street lamp and a lamplighter. The little prince couldn't quite understand what use a street lamp and a lamplighter could be up there in the sky, on a planet without any people and not a single house. However, he said to himself, *It's quite possible that this man is absurd. But he's less absurd than the king, the very vain man, the businessman, and the drunkard.* At least his work has some meaning. When he lights his lamp, it's as if he's bringing one more star to life, or one more flower. When he puts out his lamp, that sends the flower or the star to sleep. Which is a fine occupation. And therefore truly useful.

When the little prince reached this planet, he greeted the lamplighter respectfully. "Good morning. Why have you just put out your lamp?"

"Orders," the lamplighter answered. "Good morning."

"What orders are those?"



*"It's a terrible job I have."*