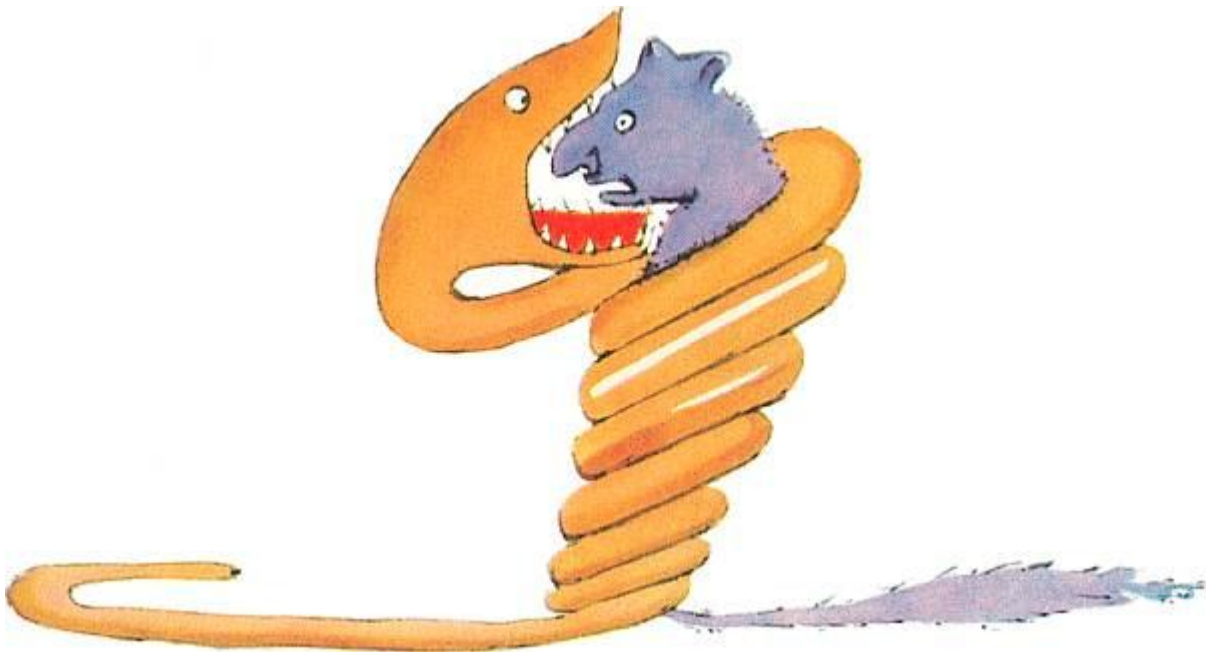


Antoine de Saint-Exupery The Little Prince

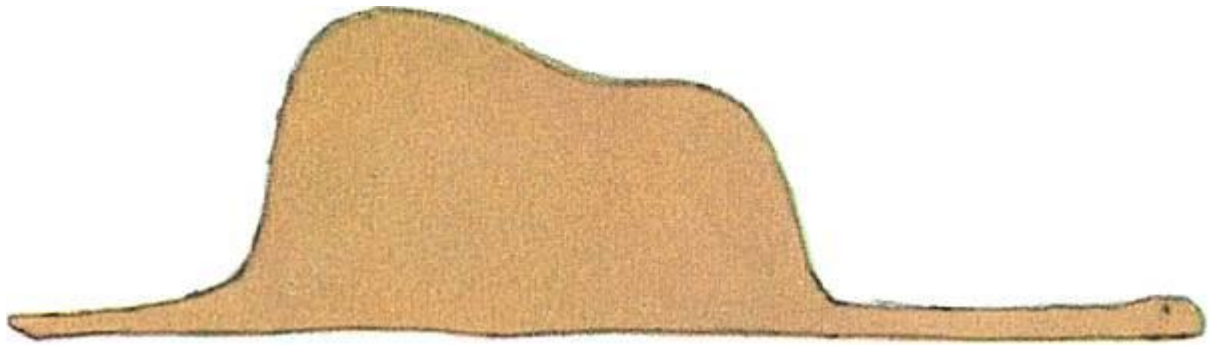


Chapter I

When I was six years old I saw a picture that had a great impact on me. It was in a book called *The real nature stories* where an ancient forest was described. There was a picture of a boa constrictor that was swallowing an animal. This is how it looked:



It said: “Boa constrictors swallow their catch without chewing. After that, they cannot move and will sleep for up to six months, which they need to digest the food.” Back then I was fascinated by jungle adventures. It didn't take me long to draw my first picture. My picture number one looked like this:

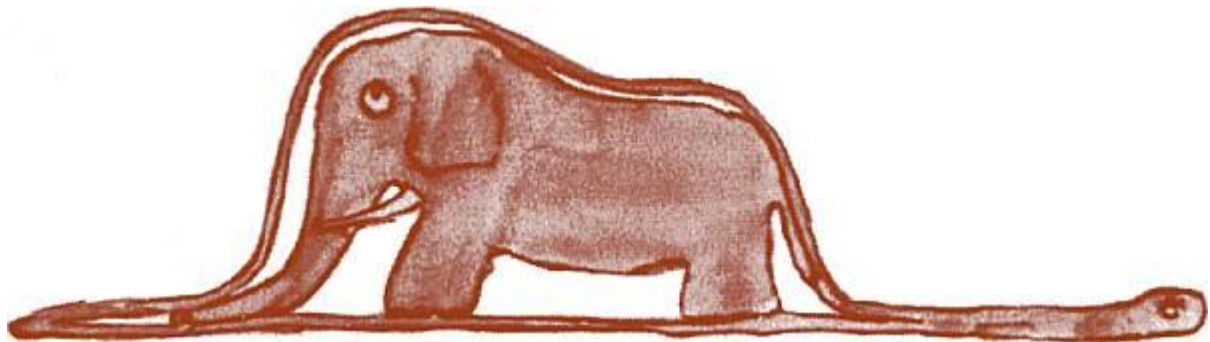


I showed my masterpiece to adults and asked whether they were scared.

“Are we scared? Who is afraid of a hat?” they answered.

But I didn't draw the hat. It was the boa constrictor digesting an elephant. But because the adults couldn't understand this I made another picture: I showed what was inside the boa constrictor so the adults were able to see it clearly. They always need everything explaining.

My picture number two looked like this:



This time the adults advised me to leave the pictures of the boa constrictor, inside or outside, and dedicate myself to Geography, Arithmetic and Grammar. So, at the age of six, I gave up the thing that could bring me a successful career as an artist. I lost inspiration because of the failures with both my pictures. Adults will never get the point, and it's too tiring for children to explain everything to them.

Later I chose another occupation. I learned to fly a plane. I travelled to all parts of the world; geography was really useful. I can tell the difference between China and Arizona at first sight. If you get lost at night, this knowledge is very valuable. During my life, I had to meet a lot of people who were busy with very important things. For a long time, I lived among adults. They were clearly visible and I was able to watch them closely. But this didn't make my opinion about them better.

When I met someone who seemed smart I used to experiment. I showed my picture number one that I always carried with me. This way, I tried to find out whether a person could really understand everything correctly. But whether it was a man or a woman, everybody always said, “This is a hat.” After such an answer, I never discussed boa constrictors, ancient life or stars with them. I came down to their level. I talked to them about bridges, golf, politics and ties. And adults were very happy to meet such an intelligent person.



Chapter II

I was rather lonely. I had nobody to talk to honestly until I had an accident while flying my plane. It happened in the Sahara Desert. Something went wrong with the engine. As there were no passengers or a mechanic with me, I decided to fix it myself. It was a matter of life or death for me: I hardly had enough water to survive for a week.

During the first night, I had to sleep on the sand thousands of miles from any civilisation. I was more isolated than a sailor in a lifeboat after a shipwreck in the middle of the ocean. So you can imagine how amazed I was when a miraculous childish voice woke me up at dawn.

“Could you draw me a lamb?” it spoke.

”Excuse me?”

”Draw me a lamb!”

I jumped up wide awake. I blinked repeatedly. I looked around carefully. I saw the most astonishing creature that was looking at me with imperturbable seriousness. Here you can see the best picture of him I managed to draw. Without a doubt, my picture lacks the charm that the original character possessed.

However, this is not my fault. Because of the adults, I had lost my inspiration to become an artist when I was six, and never tried to draw anything else except the boa constrictor, inside and outside.



Now, when I was looking at this unexpected appearance, my eyes popped out of the head in amazement. May I remind you that I’d had an accident in the desert, thousands of miles from any settlement. And still, my little man wasn’t wandering in sands exhausted from hunger, thirst or fear. Nothing about him pointed out a child lost in the desert, thousands of miles from any civilisation.

“What are you doing here?” I said to him finally when I found my voice.

“Could you draw me a lamb...” he answered very slowly as if it was a matter of high importance.

When everything is impossibly mysterious we just can’t resist. No matter how ridiculous it looked, thousands of miles from human civilization, I took a piece of paper and a pen out of my pocket.

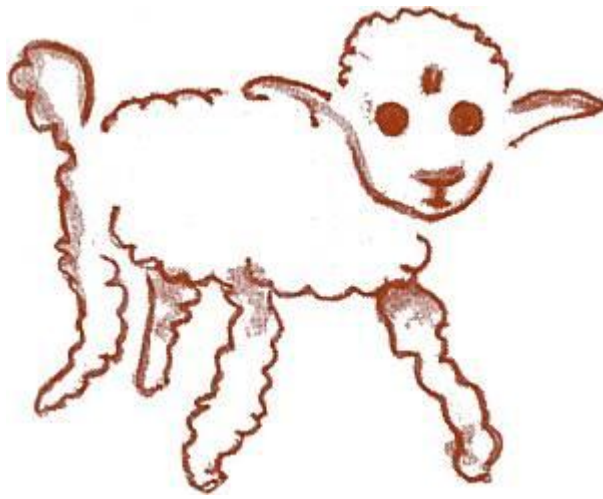
But then I remembered that my education was focused on Geography, History, Arithmetic and Grammar and I said to a little boy (though a bit sharply) that I couldn’t draw.

“It doesn’t matter. Draw me a lamb...” he replied.

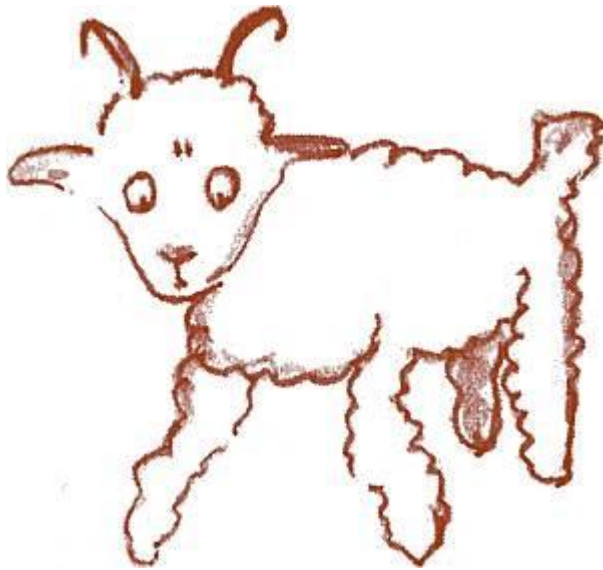
But I have never drawn lambs. So I drew him on a paper one of the two pictures that I used to demonstrate so often. The Boa constrictor, inside. I was petrified when the little boy reacted with words.

“No, no, no! I don’t want an elephant inside a boa constrictor. Boa constrictors are very dangerous animals, and elephants are huge. Everything is very small where I live. I just need a lamb. Draw me the lamb.”

I drew another picture.



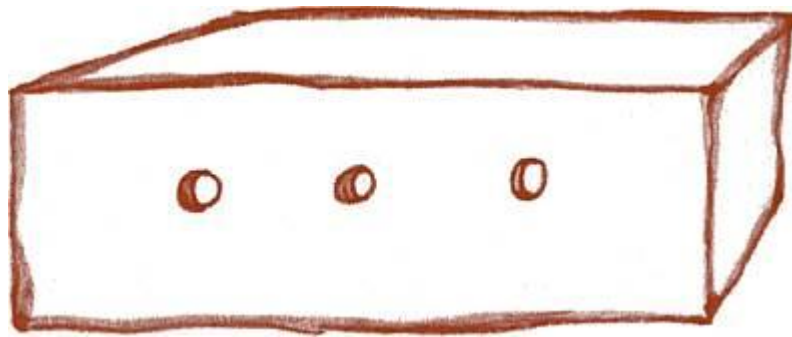
“No. This lamb looks very weak. Draw another one,” he looked carefully and said. I made another picture.



My friend laughed gently. “You can see yourself,” he said patiently. “This is not a lamb, this is a sheep. It has horns.” Then I remade the picture again.



But it was rejected like the previous ones. “This one is too old. I want the one that will live for a very long time.” By this time I’d had just about enough because I was in a hurry to sort out the engine. So I drew this picture.



In addition, I explained.

“This is only a box. The lamb, you were asking for, is inside.”

I was surprised when I spotted the enlightenment in a young judge’s face.

“This is exactly what I wanted. How much grass do you think this lamb will need?”

“Why are you asking?”

“Because everything is very small where I live...”

“I am sure there will be enough grass for him,” I said. “I drew you a very small lamb.”

He bent over the picture.

“It is not so small. Look! It went to sleep...”

That’s how I met the Little Prince.



Chapter III

I had to spend a long time to find out where he was from. It seemed that the Little Prince who was asking me so many questions didn’t hear mine. Only due to some accidentally spilt phrases, little by little I discovered the truth.

For example, when he saw my plane (I won’t draw the plane, it’s too hard for me).

“What kind of object is this?” he asked.

“This is not an object. It can fly. This is a plane. This is my plane.”

I was proud to tell him that I could fly a plane.

“What? Did you fall from the sky?” he cried then.

“I did”, I replied quietly.

“Oh, that’s funny!” the Little Prince broke into gentle laughter. It made me furious because I prefer when my failures are treated seriously.

“So you also came down from above! What planet are you from?” he added then.

At that moment I saw the light in the impenetrable darkness of his presence.

“Are you from another planet?” I asked suddenly.

He didn’t answer. He slightly shook his head leaving his eyes on the plane.

“That’s true; it wouldn’t be possible to fly from far away in this.”

And he was lost in thought for a while. Then he took my lamb out of his pocket and carefully examined his