

The Little Prince as told by a pilot-in-theory

Experimental

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The Little Prince is a strange boy who never answers questions, with hair as gold as wheat fields, and a penchant for youthful wisdom. He lives on Asteroid B-612, with two active volcanoes to heat his breakfast, and one extinct one to use as a footstool. One day, as he weeds the baobab saplings from the rock, he discovers a rose. He cultivates it, and as she grows more beautiful, she becomes more demanding, coquettish. The Prince's love for her tinges with anxiety. It complexifies. So, he escapes via bird migration. After his meanderings to other planets, he lands in the Sahara Desert, where he meets the Pilot.

I. The Prince at Six

The lights flicker-open as my father enters the study room. I am tucked under the table, so he kneels to the floor and lays on his belly. He props his body on his elbows.

The tips of his fingers pull at the blue leather. Pages peel open.

Like gossip, he tells of the Prince's interactions with adults, of the king's desperation, the vain man's foolishness, the tippler's drunken tautology. His words paint adulthood as mundane, lacking color, or light or logic. He begins to shrink. I realize that he was only so big because authority stacks inches, and the crown of his head lowers to the under-table troposphere. The pictures amuse me, though I take a deeper interest in the curved grain of the floorboards.

II. L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux

A documentary glows out from the television, and I sag, soft-like, against the back cushions. I sink into the desert that play across the screen.

Smooth as scoria:

grains of sand blow over dunes and burn scarlet against the blueish sky
Oprah Winfrey's voice, slicks through surround sound speakers imbedded in the

ceiling

(they look like lights,
you know)

Recognition flickers within me, pixelating the scene. My sister is unscathed.

III. The Prince/The Pilot/I

I bring a sketchbook to church, and instead of talking to the other children, I draw. In the chapter I had read, the Little Prince requested from the Pilot a drawing of a sheep, which he could take back to B-612 and keep. The Pilot could not manage.

Surely, because I was a child, I could draw a better sheep than the Pilot.

The Pilot's sheep: small, thin, shaven bare, shivering between leather covers

My sheep: big, bold, rounded at the edges, strong-legged

I draw more sheep than the Prince could ever maintain. They would've plucked his wheat fields dry.

IV. I had one line in the entire production.

When I perform in our dance studio's enactment of The Little Prince, I am one of many, nine-year old roses. The stage is blackbox, and new, so I unfurl one petal at a time. My umbrella unfurls with them.

There is one rose, and her name is Bridget, and she is unique in all the world. The audience gets to watch her unfurl one petal at a time. She is flirtatious, moody, lines bubbling from her lips like a fountain of story.

The rest of us swirl around her in dance, of which I take comfort in its simplicity, in its togetherness. We are a dime a dozen. She is one in a million.

I decide I am not a stage person.

V. A Parallelism with the Tippler

The classroom un-flicker-furls, and the whiteboard scrawls with colors. The lesson is utterly un fascinating. The graph paper on my desk is littered with loose-wristed scribbles.

A wraith, graceful and subconscious, taps me on the shoulder, pulling me back from whatever milk-froth-thought I'd drifted into. She is hairless, and eyeless, with long, deli-

cate fingers, and she collects my wanderings into a teakwood bowl.

“What are you doing there?”

“I am daydreaming.”

“Why are you daydreaming?”

“So I may forget.”

“Forget what?”

“Forget that I am ashamed.”

“Ashamed of what?”

“Ashamed of daydreaming!” Even as I think, my eyes unravel to periphery and I gaze into a space that does not exist.

VI. I think he is lonely.

The fox, upon meeting the Prince, begs to be tamed because as a wild fox, he is like any other in the world. However, if he is to be tamed, he would be unique in all the world because he would not be a wild fox, he would be the Prince’s fox. “You see the grain-fields down yonder?” the fox tells the Little Prince, “Wheat is of no use to me. The wheat fields have nothing to say to me. And that is sad. But you have hair that is the colour of gold. Think how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me! The grain, which is also golden, will bring me back to the thought of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat...”

So, the Prince obliges.

I am reminded of the fox when a friend tells me that there is no such thing as intrinsic value. He tells me that:

importance is proportional to rarity

because he is a musician, a viola player,

and an Asian one at that, he is not rare.

Therefore, he is not important.

the fox was like many other foxes, unimportant in its foxhood. Until the Prince tamed him. Until the Prince made the fox his. *It is the time you have wasted for your █████ that makes your █████ so important.* Thus, the fox was unimportant until an external source, the Prince, made it important.

He forgets that:

the fox begged to be tamed, implying an already-existing capability of being tamed, which is definitively intrinsic. This implies potential, and potential is, by nature, value. he is not a fox, so it doesn’t apply to him. (though I see the resemblance)

VII. Is Anyone Home?

The Little Prince compares his body to a husk, a shell, and there is nothing sad about a shell, is there? It is old, and abandoned, and empty.

But is there?

My yearbooks are still inhabited by old shadows the way naphthalene clings to wool. Signatures are scrawled thin, occasionally accompanied by notes. I flicker to the first page of my grade’s section, and a familiar face stares back at me. It is old, and abandoned, and empty.

Ink unfurls from my hands, and I meticulously circle the face and name. In my best printing, under the photo, I inscribe his date of birth. A quick hyphen. May 2018.

I fall asleep with a Little Prince in my lap.