



**Elena Moshko  
Leonid L. Smirnoff**

# HEART of ATLANTIS

Fairy-tale

Leonid Smirnoff

**Heart of Atlantis**

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The youth wants to perform a feat while the girl wants quiet life. Everything turns out just the opposite: the girl has to perform a feat while the youth changes his attitude to life.

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## **Heart of Atlantis**

### ***Fairy-tale***

#### **1**

“Who’s there?”

“Hush! Sh!”

“Who’s that?”

“It’s me, Kayumba. I’ve come to save you, Umanga!”

“Kayumba ...”

“Have no fear, I’ve put the guards to sleep. Grandmother Maganda gave me some magic herb. I made small balls from it, spit the balls at them through a tube out of the bushes and they fell asleep. They will not wake up till sunrise. And we will have gone far by sunrise! Grab the liana! Oh, how heavy you are!”

It was fresh and nice atop. After staying in the musty deep pit for three days he savoured the fragrance of the mysterious Atlantean night with all his primitive scent.

“Let’s flee, Umanga! If we hide in the mountains before sunrise, they won’t find us!”

He gazed admiringly at this slim twelve-year-old woman, a true huntress-maid. She risked everything. She condemned herself to eternal expulsion, to live hiding from people till her very last day. To live away from her close people, from her tribe. And everything – for his sake! There appeared a goldish glimmer on her long black hair in the light of shadowy, gleamy, unconceivable stars. Her slim strong legs seemed to be running already there, towards the mountains, to save him. She was restlessly making some fatuitous movements:

“Let’s flee, Umanga!”

He took her in his arms, cuddled her. Maybe if she had come on the first night, he would have run away with her without hesitation. He would have been running on the sunbeaten grass warm even at night with all the irrepressible agility of his strong fast legs filled with the energy of fourteen years of age; he would have picked up Kayumba in his arms and would have been running, running with her to the place of the saving mountains tops, where they would be together for many hundreds years to come, where a new tribe would be born: his and hers.

She embraced him squeezing herself up against him breathless. She did not understand why he stopped at pause:

“Let’s flee, Umanga!”

Maybe if she had come on the second night he would also have fled with her. He still had some doubts then ... He knew that at sunrise after the third night he would be taken to the precipice and thrown down. He would be flying long. Like a bird, a strong, independent, carefree bird. Yes, there were stones down there, yes, he would crash against them and his blood would splash the neighbouring rocks. But there would be several seconds of flying before that ...

“Let’s flee, Umanga!”

But this was already the third night. What had changed? Nothing exteriorly. He had just stayed one night longer in the deep pit with smooth upright walls, damp and clayey. He will not be taken to the precipice after the third night. He will go there himself. He, Umanga, the eldest son of the Great Chief, he, the strongest, fastest and smartest among the young warriors, he who had been recognized by his tribe to be the best among the best so many times. It was he who was to be

sacrificed. Otherwise his tribe would lose the war with the aliens. Otherwise the whole tribe was in for death or slavery at best. No, at worst it was slavery. At best it was death.

“Sorry, Kayumba...”

He went back down by the same liana thrown by Kayumba. He waited for the dawn. The first sounds above him made him start. Guards? Had his time come? Would he be taken there, to the rocks?

No. This was Kayumba coming down to him.

## 2

He was eating corn pones while Kayumba was watching him perplexedly. She could hardly control herself. It must have seemed to him from the outside that she, a daughter of Atlantis, did not know what it was to cry, to be lost in doubts! Did he want to be reputed to be a hero? And what about her?

“No, I’m incapable of feats either for the sake of duty or glory”, she touched his hair, “My happiness is here. Here it is, in my palm. I just want to live – quietly, peacefully, calmly. I’m tired of being afraid. And I don’t want to hear anything else about war, death, stone-mortars and barbarian customs. I feel frightened. Protect me!”

Umanga just stubbornly shook his head in silence. He didn’t want to hear anything. If his were free at that moment, he would stop up his ears. Kayumba flared up.

“I don’t understand why you, a son of the chief, should be sacrificed! Who will stay alive if the best among the best perish like that, pointlessly? Cowards, punks? You are among strangers, Umanga. I’m your house, your home, your abode. Wake! You have been betrayed! You are being killed! Not like a hero but like a victim!”

She imagined what it would be like if ... She stayed alone. Everything would lose its meaning. In the moonlight his hair was streaked with the gold of meadows reminding of fields sown with wheat. The corn smell was so homely ... Umanga was so close. She wanted to welcome every morning with him. To mix up days looking into his brave, lively eyes. To make pones, to cook soup, to make the bed, to drink every instant, to catch every glance, to feel every sigh. He was so close and so far.

“You are saying the wrong thing, the wrong...” responded the youth and looked into Kayumba’s eyes with a long penetrating, clever and commanding look.

“I love you.”

“The wrong thing...”

“Let’s flee, Umanga! Let’s flee.”

“It’s wrong... It’s absolutely wrong!”

He moved awkwardly as if he wanted to dismiss something irrelevant.

“I will not just step into the precipice, I will accomplish a feat in the name of those who have a sixth feeling, whose heart has bled out, whose mouth has dried up from hollow words and false promises. In the name of those who want to win this war! I am foreordained to revive. To revive out of emptiness if I do THAT! There is no light in the escape for me. What’s the point of living in the platitude after that?”

There came a long silence. She felt herself perishing under the heaviness of his look, so strange and cold. Then something incredible happened. All her hopes, all her joy, all her childlike touching dreams seemed to flow out of her. They flowed out and sank into the clay of this damp pit. Her hands weakened. Kayumba gave in.

“What else can I do for you?”

“That’s it. I knew you would understand me. I believed that. You will leave in the morning and will cut the liana so that it wouldn’t occur to anybody to save me. And to prevent anybody from thinking that I wanted to flee. I’m not a coward!”

“Leave you? I can’t!”

“You can. You must. And not only for my sake. Not only for our sake. In the very heart of Atlantis there is a secret passage where you will take the tribe in case of danger.”

“Why me?”

“Because you will be the only person to know how to find the way there. I know a secret, listen to me...”

... They talked long. The words interlaced like branches in a thick forest. It was impossible to untwine them, to unfasten, to separate them with one's hands. Snatches of phrases jumbled together clutching at one another with their curves. The midnight sounds echoing the young Atlantes soared upwards into the sky and then fell with yellow leaves into the dark night. And music was born carrying their non-childish dreams into the world of semireality, into semidreamland.



### 3

Great Chief Astrodon was indignant. How dared the priests choose his eldest son as the sacrifice? He was beside himself with rage. The sound of the stone-mortars that were constantly driving aliens away from the walls of the fortress was overclouding his thoughts even more. The triumphant warlike yells of the Atlantes that never stopped in Atlantis gave way to squeals of stones and aliens' howl. All this made him nervous.

Astrodon stood motionless on the steps of the temple leading to the altar and looked up. The starry sky over his grey head was especially deep, clear, convex like a lens on that night. It seemed as if it wanted to unearth the mystery of universal existence.

“My son, Umanga, will never see such stars again. How dared the priests dispose of his destiny in such a way? He is the best among the best! He should live, fight, combat! His children must give the world great-grandsons like him! Strong, handsome, smart!”

Astrodon was going to the temple to ask the High priest for mercy or at least for a delay. They couldn't help listening to him. The word of the Great Chief was weighty. But he had made his decision – he would go the whole hog, use the right of the last veto that was unconditionally fulfilled in any case according to the laws of Atlantis and this right was given once when the chief was abdicating ...

“Let them immolate me, Astrodon. Umanga will then take my place!”

## 4

Umanga was watching his huntress-maid stroking the feathers of the little tame falcon who unerringly found her coming here at her whistle. He wished everything were over as soon as possible. Kayumba did not cry. The Atlantes matured early. While in further civilizations a twelve-year-old girl was practically a child, a twelve-year-old Atlantean female was considered to be quite self-dependent if not an adult woman. And a fourteen-year-old hunter was already a protector, a getter and could become a chief. It was probably too early to be the high chief.

It was dawn. Although the liana thrown by Kayumba was still in the pit they were waiting quietly. Out of the pit the night stars looked bright and huge. At night darkness was not depressing. The darkness in the pit merged with the darkness of the southern night. At night the darkness in the pit was not anything independent and strong. The darkness in the pit in the morning, the darkness in the pit in the daytime was oppressing, depressing, dominating.

It was hard to count the time here. The curtain of his destiny was to be dropped at dawn but it had dawned quite a long time ago and they were still waiting ...

When a sunray touched his face he understood that it was noon at least. It was only at noon that the sun in its zenith was looking so deep, down to the very bottom, that the ray was able to reach him, remind him of the blazing world that stayed there, overhead. They must have fallen asleep waiting for the guards. The afternoon was obviously well along.

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