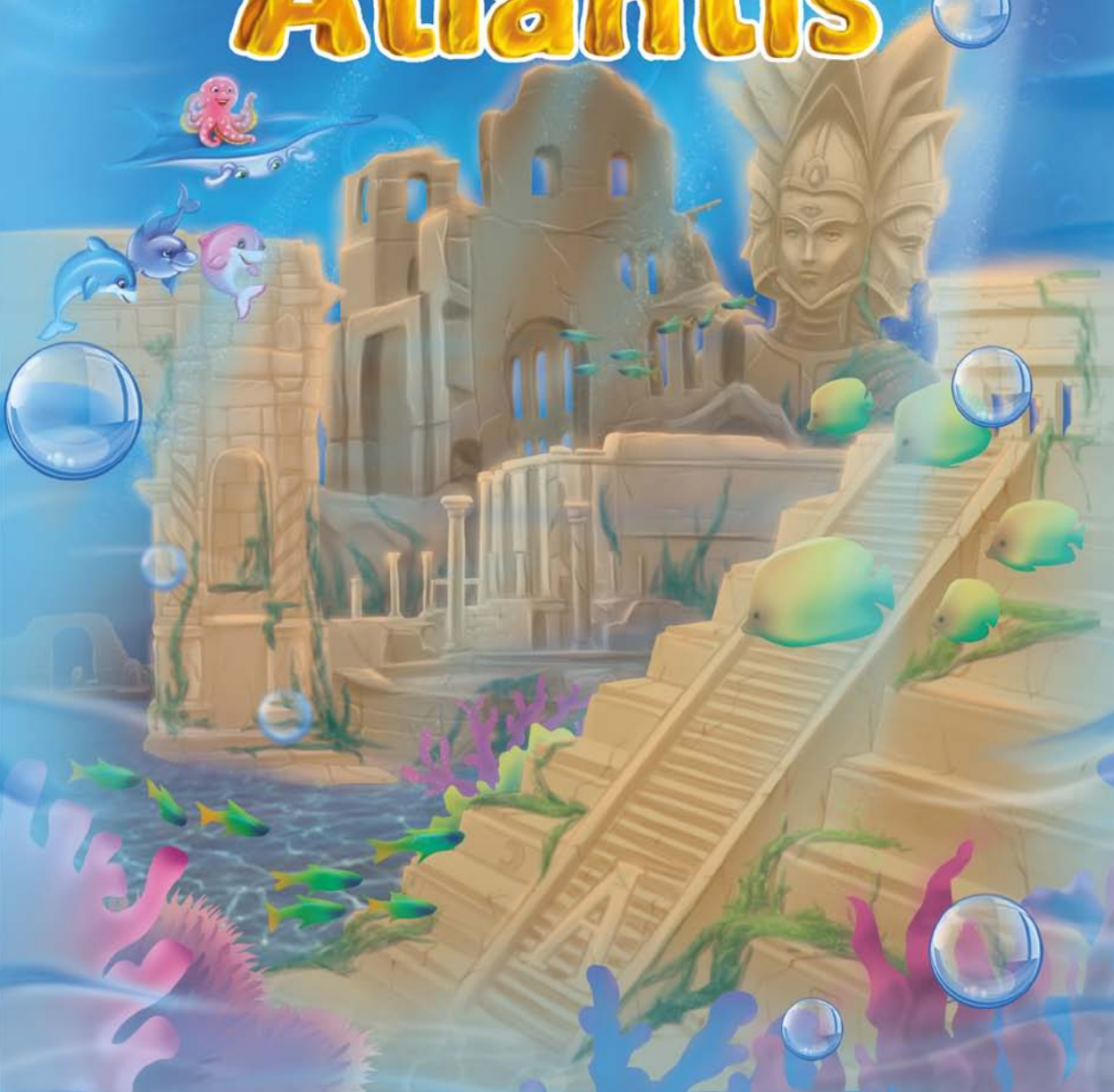


Igor Bondar

# Dolphins 2 Atlantis

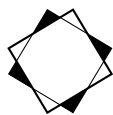


Igor Bondar

# Dolphin 2 Atlantis

A fairy tale

Illustrated by Alyona Garbuz



“Zolotoye sechenie“  
private publishers  
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A honeymoon in Atlantis. Ordinary people may only dream of such a thing but for our dolphins Bin and Karen this is not a dream but reality.

Illustrated by Alyona Garbuz.

“Zolotoye sechenie“ private publishers.

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## *The Honeymoon*



he two dolphins were having fun swimming and jumping through the waves. Occasionally they would leap very high into the last rays of the dying sun and sometimes did somersaults in the air.

Every now and then they would stop and look at each lovingly and then continue on their way. For some reason, the dolphins didn't talk to each other and in fact hadn't spoken a word on the whole journey to their island destination...



"It is a huge puzzle for me as well, Jack" Ian answered his friend continuing their conversation. "Karen has never left the island without telling us."

"Love is curious thing!" Jack smiled back. "I have no doubt about one thing my friend. I am sure that she has gone off with that guy she was with and that she is very happy."

The friends picked up their buckets full of fish and went into the water to feed the dolphins. There were not that many tourists on the island that day and they were all able to have a turn to hand feed the graceful inhabitants of sea.

Before long all the fish was gone and the buckets were empty. Ian and Jack climbed onto the rocks sticking out of the water and continued to discuss the recent disappearance of their friend and companion from the island.

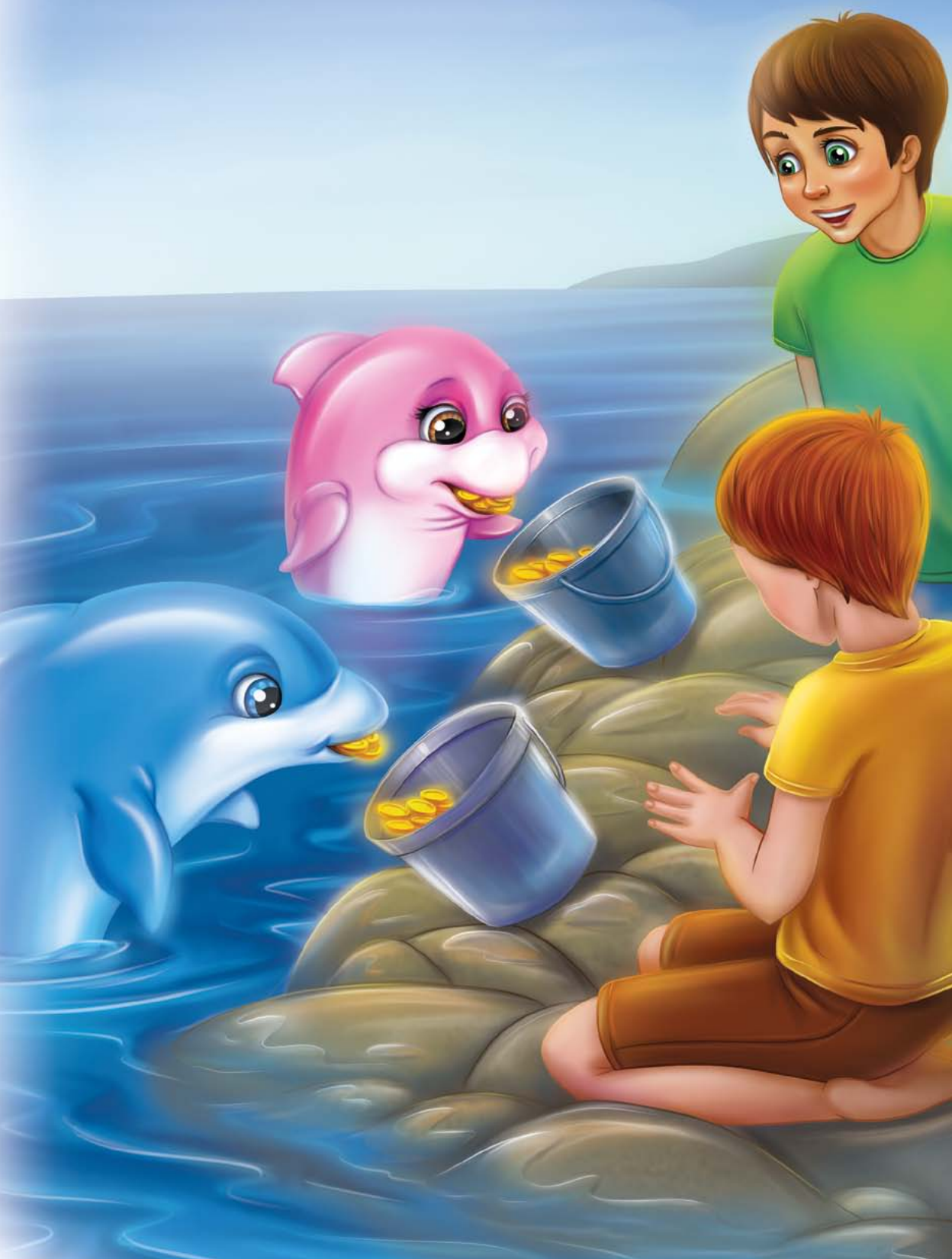
“You know Ian, it’s just great really! The way she followed her love just like that, without hesitation” Jack mused. “If I’m destined to one day to fall in love with someone, I want to follow her just like Karen did - without hesitation.”

“Well my friend...” Ian smiled doubtfully. “I don’t think that there would be too many girls who would be interested in two broke guys who don’t have a house and don’t even have a car. Girls are looking for ambitious and financially successful young men and not hopeless romantics like you and I.”

“Who knows?” Jack smiled back. “Karen was also a hopeless romantic and now she is really happy.”

“Charlie, Charlie!” Ian’s loud call interrupted him. “Look Jack, look who has come to visit! Charlie, where have you been all week? And... who is that with you?”

Ian had suddenly noticed a new dolphin next to Charlie.



“It seems that our Charlie has finally found a girlfriend” Jack laughed as he bent down and stroked Charlie’s head. “Congratulations my friend! What’s her name?”

The young man leaned over and also stroked the new dolphin’s head who for some reason was not even a little bit frightened.

“Let’s call her Karen, like our lost friend!” he heard his friend’s voice. “So she will always remind us of her. After all, Karen loved dolphins very much.”

“Agreed!” Jack replied with a smile and bent down to their new guest. “It’s a pity that we have nothing left to feed you with Karen. The fish are finished. Perhaps you will come earlier tomorrow?”

To prove what he said was true he showed the dolphin his empty bucket. What happened next sounds more like something out of a fairytale rather than what actually occurred. The new dolphin stuck her head out of the water, put it into the bucket and opened her mouth. The young men heard a tinkling sound of some metal objects hitting the bottom of the bucket. At the same time, Charlie was doing the same thing with Ian’s bucket.

No sooner had they done that, both dolphins turned around simultaneously, slapped their tails on the water surface and swam off together into the darkness.

Both friends were completely stunned and when the fountain of spray settled they looked in their buckets.

“I-a-a-n.....!” Jack finally was able to talk again. He was holding a handful of ancient gold coins in his hand and had a silly grin on his face. “It seems that we are not poor romantics anymore.”

“Apparently not my friend.” Ian replied with the same stunned expression looking at the coins inside his bucket. He then added, “Well, I am ready to follow my true love now.”



Meanwhile, the dolphins Bin and Karen watched both men from a distance and smiled.

“Phew! Finally, we can talk!” Bin broke the long silence first as he looked toward the coast and asked his girlfriend with some concern. “Darling, is it normal for Jack’s and Ian’s eyes to be so big and round?”

Karen laughed merrily.

“It’s normal, Binny. Very, very normal!”



Next day the young dolphin couple dined at Bin’s parent’s home. Bin’s mother had cooked up some tasty fish following a new recipe and prepared a big platter of oysters that Karen loved so much. Bin’s parents had taken the sweet, kind girl into their hearts. Their dinners with her always brought warmth and

joy into their lives. Karen also told them interesting stories about how people lived, something which had always aroused Bin's parent's curiosity.

Today she was explaining to Bin's father what young people did after their wedding ceremony.

"As a rule, young people spend their honeymoon in some remote place where they can spend time together alone. Usually, this is a very beautiful and romantic place."

"Honeymoon?" Bin's father asked her again.

"Honey means very sweet and pleasant." Karen explained with a laugh. "Honey tastes a bit like the cake that I brought you that day."

Bin's mother rolled her eyes in delight.

"That sounds so beautiful!" she said and immediately asked her husband, "Dear, why haven't we travelled anywhere?"

"Actually" Bin's father put down a piece of fish and looked at his wife with a smile, "in all our years together, all we have been doing is travelling from one beautiful place to another."

Karen laughed merrily.

"Wow! It seems that your honeymoon turned into honey life."

"That's true" Bin's mother replied, but she didn't give up. "But, I wonder if there is some special place that I have never seen yet?"

Bin's father thought for a bit.

"To be honest, we dolphins have probably been just about everywhere. However there

are definitely some special places underwater for Karen to see because she was brought up on land.”

Bin looked warmly at his sweetheart.

“Dear, is there some place in the ocean that you would like to visit on our honeymoon?”

Karen looked into his gentle eyes and smiled.

“Oh Binny, everything around me is interesting and beautiful now. Besides, all the interesting places I know are on land. Wait a minute...” Karen suddenly shuddered with excitement and swam in a small circle around the table.

She came back and looked at him with a glint in her eye.

“You know what? I have been interested in one particular place since childhood. Have you ever heard about Atlantis?”

Bin and his parents shook their heads.

“It is one of the greatest mysteries of the world. According to legend, there was an ancient land of Atlanteans that one day sank completely underwater” Karen began telling the story. “People on earth have created dozens of hypotheses in this regard. However, no one has ever found any trace of the underwater city. Since I am now a dolphin, I’ve got a good chance of solving this puzzle.”

Karen smiled broadly.

“I read a lot about it when I was little. What I would really like is to discover the mystery of Atlantis.”

The other dolphins around the table looked at each other.

“Wow!” Bin’s father said first. “Atlantis! The story is as intriguing as it is romantic.”

Bin looked at Karen with a smile.

“Darling I would happily go on an expedition with you to look for it. Let’s make it our underwater honeymoon.”

“All right, but...” Karen began to say with some doubt, “I don’t know the exact place where Atlantis is supposed to be.”

Bin’s father smiled.

“Don’t forget dear, that under the sea it is normal and usual to help each other out. If such a place really exists, then the local marine inhabitants will gladly show you the way to it.”

“That’s great!” Karen smiled. “It turns out that this puzzle may not be as difficult to solve as I imagined.”

“Of course it is not difficult dear — provided that Atlantis really did exist in the first place.” Bin smiled. “Well, let’s go to see Medky and you can show me the approximate location of Atlantis.”

“Oh no” Bin’s mother stood with her flippers akimbo. “An underwater honeymoon is a brilliant idea without doubt but it is an underwater disgrace to leave so many of mother’s goodies on the table!”

The dolphins laughed and cheerfully returned to the table.



All of Bin and Karen's friends gathered around Medky's globe to have a look at the place that our young couple were going to visit. Bolly the manta could not easily swim inside the shipwreck where Medky the turtle lived, so our friends had taken the big globe out and placed it near the cannon.

Karen spun the familiar ball with her flipper for a long time until she finally found the spot she was looking for.

"It must be somewhere here!" she said confidently. "I clearly remember that the majority of hypotheses suggest that the continent of Atlantis was located either in the Mediterranean Sea or somewhere way out in the Atlantic Ocean. All these places are not that far apart."

Everybody gasped.

"Well my dear," Bolly the manta spoke first addressing her words to Karen, "it won't be a quick trip. Your journey will take at minimum of several months maybe even up to a year. It will likely turn out to be a super extended honeymoon."

"Bolly a long and happy life lies ahead of us." Bin replied with an optimistic smile. "Besides, now I also want to find this ancient mysterious civilization of terrestrial people."

"My friend even my curiosity is aroused by all of this." Geo joined in although he sounded a little sad.

“Oh well, Bin’s parents did tell me that only couples go on a honeymoon, so I won’t ask you to take me along with you on your journey.”

Karen and Bin looked at each other in surprise.

“Geo my friend get that nonsense out of your head!” Bin spoke from his heart. “Our underwater rules will be different. Of course I am happy to be with Karen but I will feel even better with my friends nearby. Am I right darling?”

Karen nodded with a broad smile.

“Of course Bin! During the trip you and I will find enough time to be together. Having our friends along will bring us joy and make the journey so much more interesting.”

“Then I can come with you?” Geo’s voice sounded much happier.

“Absolutely my friend! We would be very happy if you would join us!” Bin replied.

“Oh, I wish I could join you too.” Ponty the octopus said with a dreamy although somewhat sad smile. He continued to twist the globe with one tentacle. “However, I cannot swim long distances.”

“Not unless you were lying on my back...” Bolly the manta said while turning her eyes with the tips of her wings, moving them a little.

“Bolly, you mean that?” Ponty asked in surprise. The globe was spinning twice as fast. “By the way, not only could I stick to your back with my suckers, I can also give you a massage along the way.”

Manta’s wings froze at the top point.



“Several months of massage.” Bolly began thinking. “Plus an ancient civilization, plus new friends and adventures...”

The manta looked at her friends with a smile.

“Well dear friends, if were to stay here I sincerely doubt that my life will be as exciting as it would be accompanying you on your trip.”

“Bolly don’t forget about the hundred or so new jokes that you will hear on the way to Atlantis” Medky the turtle smiled. “The whole atoll is already tired of the stories about the poor perch.”

All the friends burst out laughing.

“It’s a pity that I can’t join you.” Medky put in a sad word. “I have to lay my eggs here and I cannot shift the responsibility to anyone else. Otherwise, I would love to come along.”

“Don’t worry, my friend!” Karen gently stroked the turtle’s shell with her flipper. “There will definitely be another time for us to share an adventure together.”

“All right dear friends.” Bin finally decided to sum up their conversation. “The upcoming trip will be long and perhaps not that easy. For that reason, I ask that you all think it over once again and weigh up all the pros and cons. If you decide to come with us, we will meet you in...”

Bin looked at Karen.

“Perhaps in a week dear?”

“Yes, that would be enough time.” she nodded gaily. She was also excited about going on the journey with her friends.

“Well OK then. See you in a week!”

## On the Way



even days later, the three dolphins and the manta with the octopus on her back left the atoll. Bin's parents and Medky the turtle saw them off and waved their flippers for a long time after them.

"Well my friends, did you all have enough time to tie up loose ends?" Bin asked his companions when the atoll was out of sight.

"The point is dear friend" Geo replied philosophically, "that it is almost impossible to finish everything. However, you can easily escape from some things for a while."

A burst of laughter drowned out his last words.

"Well then onwards to new adventures!" Bin said cheerfully.

They had lined up in a nice formation. The three dolphins swam ahead and the graceful manta with the octopus on her back swam behind them. If perchance some diver saw this underwater procession, he would have definitely thought that some high-ranking octopus was going somewhere in a sea carriage drawn by dolphins. As though to help create

the illusion, Ponty ceremoniously held Bolly's little mirror in one of his tentacles. This was her sole but essential condition of her participation in such a long journey.



After some time, Bin turned to his girlfriend.

“Darling! Please tell us everything that you know about Atlantis so that we have a clear understanding of it. Besides, your story will make our journey more interesting.”

“All right Binny.” Karen smiled, assembled her thoughts and began her story. “Actually, Atlantis is one of the greatest mysteries of all mankind. Information about it was derived from several sources. All the stories have one thing in common. Atlantis disappeared underwater a long time ago — about eleven thousand years ago. The city was located on several large islands and some sources even mention a whole continent.”

Karen was silent for some time trying to remember the details and then went on.

“There are many and various rumors and legends about the Atlanteans. One thing is certain — the civilization of Atlantis was highly developed and beautiful. They already had flying vehicles, the Atlanteans possessed many modern forms of energy and so on. Their lifespan was also much longer than those of ordinary people today.”

Geo who swam near her asked.

“Then why was Atlantis wiped off the face of earth Karen? What theories do people have in that regard?”

“There are many of them Geo. I think the following one may be pretty close. At first the Atlanteans were very kind and spiritual beings. They developed science, shared knowledge and made fair laws. However, over the course of time they became more and more unfriendly and arrogant. Some inhabitants of other countries began to worship them as gods. Before long there were less and less kind Atlanteans in the city. Atlantis soon began to unleash war on other nations. There is a legend that God gave them a warning to stop, think about everything and make amends. He gave them a generous amount of time to reflect but He also gave them an ultimatum and a deadline. However, the citizens of Atlantis did not make the right decision and to the contrary they unleashed a great new war. That is why when the deadline expired Atlantis disappeared underwater.”

Karen looked at her companions.

“There are many other theories and hypotheses about Atlantis and its doom, but I like that one. The story teaches us to be considerate and kind no matter what we own or have.”

“That is really insightful and sounds very plausible.” Ponty the octopus said first.

“It would be really interesting to find this civilization and have a look. I think if it really existed

then we stand a good chance of finding it.” Bolly the manta replied.

“As far as I know nothing gets overgrown with coral in those cool waters, so a big underwater city would still be clearly visible. I think that many underwater inhabitants in those places must know about this city — unless it’s a fairytale” Geo said.

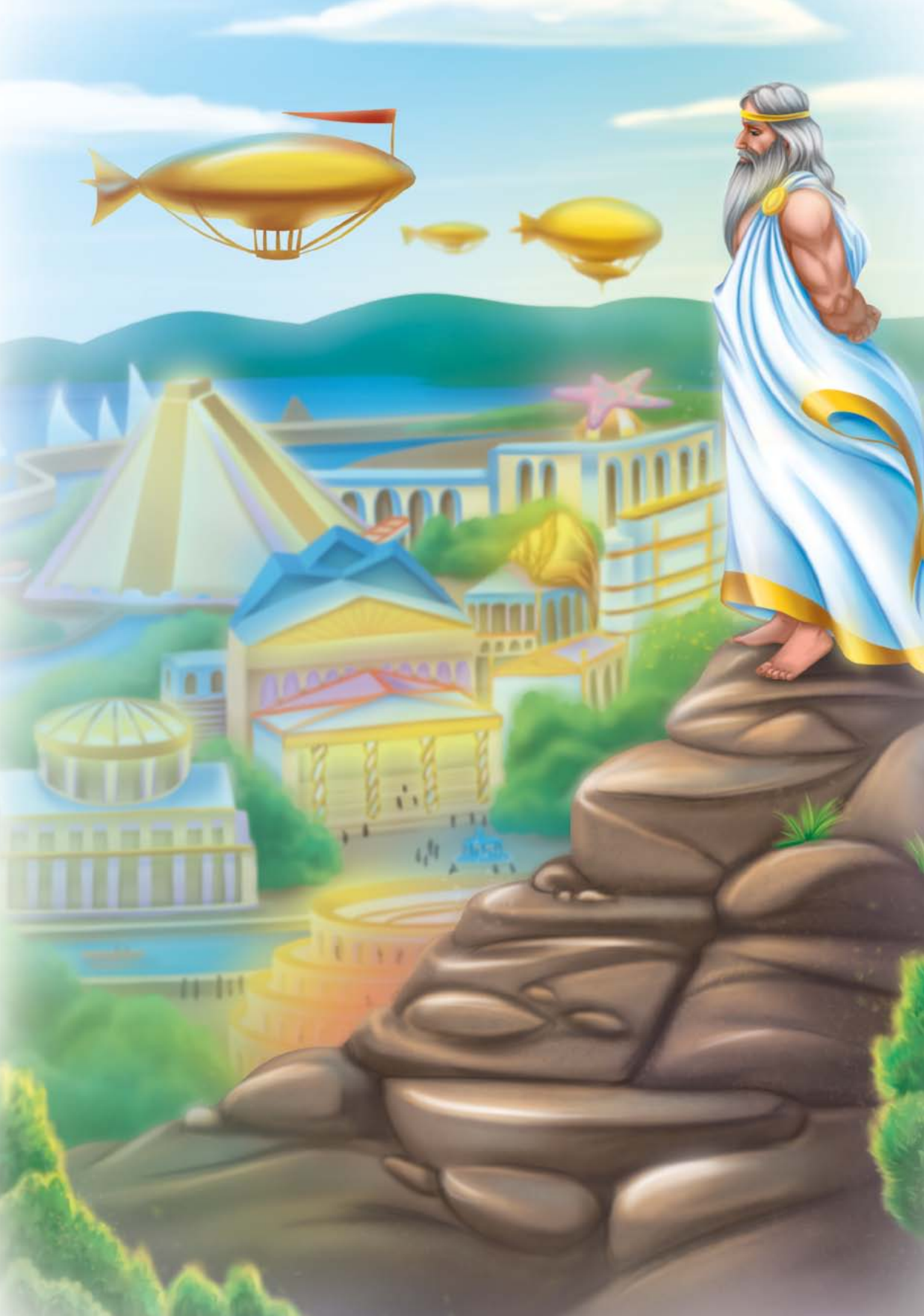
“Yeah and it’s great that we have a fellow traveler who was once a human” Bin said looking into Karen’s eyes with a warm smile. “If we lived in such a flooded city we would have no idea about its real value.”

“Maybe that is for the best Bin” Karen smiled back. “A good and simple life is always the most joyful one. As for our honeymoon, Atlantis is just perfect. Even more so that we are traveling with our friends to such an interesting place and have the opportunity to experience some unique adventures.”

“I agree with you completely dear” Bin replied with a smile.

## ***Eleven thousand years ago***

*The Atlantean named Ikas was sitting on top of a mountain and looking down at the wonderful city of Atlantis with a sad smile. The bright sun was beautifully reflected off the surface of countless canals and the myriad of gold trimmed buildings.*



*Well-dressed Atlanteans were walking along the city streets, there were airships were hovering in the sky and the sea was literally speckled with hundreds of colorful sails.*

*Atlantis! Ikas loved his land so much! He had lived here for almost seven hundred years and remembered many wonderful events in its history. He remembered back to when he and his friends had first settled, then beautified their land and built the houses and canals. He also remembered his primary mission and that of every Atlantean, namely to nurture kindness and compassion in the world. He had to bring knowledge, develop science and most importantly, he had to maintain contact with Heaven and bring only kindness and love into this world.*

*These thoughts made the old Atlantean's eyes brim with salty tears. Unfortunately, very few of them, only those led by their supreme priest named Aya, still remembered their noble mission. The rest of the Atlanteans, to varying degrees, had forgotten or abandoned it.*

*Year by year his precious Atlantis despite preserving its external splendor was becoming colder inside. Many Atlanteans had already begun to consider themselves nearly gods, others were making plans to conquer neighboring lands, while the rest of them had sunk into a mire of luxury and self-gratification. Genuine simplicity and warm hospitality had sadly become*

*only distant memories. Still that was not the worst of it.*

*Ikas sighed. Forty-nine years ago the through the supreme priest Aya, God warned the Atlanteans and reminded them of their principal mission on this world. He gave them forty-nine years to change their ways. However almost nobody believed or listened to the supreme priest back then. There were but a few hundred kindhearted and committed Atlanteans that rallied to him. Ikas was among them.*

*Since that time the situation in Atlantis had become even worse and people had continued unleashing new wars. The normally peaceful Atlanteans had never fallen so low. All those around the supreme priest prepared for the worst. The remainder of the Atlanteans remained oblivious, did not want to hear anything and refused to even contemplate what it may mean.*

*Recently God had warned the supreme priest to be ready for the terrible things that were to come. Ikas looked at his shining city as his eyes filled with tears once again. He understood that the end was near. He had no fear. He was just very sad.*

## Massages and Jokes



ver the first few days our friends managed to swim along the Great Barrier Reef and move closer towards the equator and the many island archipelagoes. Different types of animals lived in these warm waters and they now often encountered saltwater crocodiles. Our friends were not fond of talking to the big green reptiles who had only two things on their mind — sleeping and eating. So they swam past them in silence while Ponty the octopus sometimes amused himself by reflecting sunlight into their eyes with Bolly's mirror. Once he let a young crocodile have a look at his own reflection in the mirror. Seeing himself the crocodile recoiled in horror, shrieked and plunged into the depths.

At times our friends met other dolphins, mantas, turtles and even whales on the way. Sometimes, they stopped to chat with them and other times they just swam by nodding in a sign of greeting. When someone asked them about their journey they answered

that they were going to the Atlantic Ocean. They just did not have enough time to explain the real purpose of their trip.

Our friends spent a few more days weaving in and out between islands before arriving in Singapore. Karen had visited the city once before and showed her friends its center from the waterside. Geo and Ponty were dumfounded as they ogled a large complex with a huge ship lying on top of three tall buildings. There were also enormous ships in the Singapore harbor and our friends got the impression that this city extended across the water surface.

After admiring all these wonders of human civilization our travelers moved further along to the coast of Thailand and then to the Similan Islands. They spent several days there to make ready for a long passage to the Maldives.

There were many mantas in the Similan Islands, so Bolly accompanied by Ponty of course, began discussing the news with them and telling jokes. Ponty created considerable commotion among local mantas when they saw him deftly massaging Bolly's back. A couple of curious mantas decided to try it too and after the experience they quickly set off to visit their local octopuses.

Ponty spent the next two days teaching his local relatives how to massage mantas, dolphins, and even humans. However, the latter workshop was purely theoretical. It was hardly likely that any person swimming in the sea would think that an octopus

approaching his back only intended to give him a pleasant massage.

During this downtime the dolphins communicated with their relatives as well as with graceful and peaceful leopard sharks. It soon became clear that some of local dolphins had already been to the Atlantic. Geo and Bin asked them to describe their journey in detail. Just in case the friends also asked them about different underwater cities.

Two dolphins actually remembered some ancient, small buildings, but they knew nothing about Atlantis.



One afternoon Bin and Karen decided to swim off together for a while. The sea was calm that day and the dolphins swam gracefully just under the surface of the water. Sometimes they laughed and jumped over each other and sometimes they cuddled and swam together in unison.

“I am so glad to be with you!” Bin said happily, when they were swimming in a lagoon. “It is as if my whole life became brighter and I found great meaning which I have never had before.”

“Love is almighty and magical Binny!” Karen replied with a smile. “It completely fills everyone who is deeply in love. It has filled us too”.

“Yes darling it’s true!” Bin smiled and looked seriously into his girlfriend’s eyes. “Please answer



one question that is very important to me. Did you give up a lot when you decided to leave the earth and follow me?”

“To be honest, I think I actually did lose something,” Karen replied after a moment and then added, “but I gained much more! That is the truth Bin. Just love me and forget about that question.”

“Thank you!” Bin answered, looking into her eyes. “Thank you so much!”

“No, I should thank you silly!” Karen gently snuggled up to him. “You were not afraid to change your life first for the sake of our love and I just copied you.”

“I disagree.” Bin raised his tail and slapped it on the surface, making a fountain of spray, “However that is not that important actually. It is not important at all now.”

“That’s right” Karen nodded. “I cannot help being amazed by how little we need to be happy. All we need is our heart full of love and nothing else!”

Karen raised her tail too and loudly slapped it on the surface.

“Nothing else can you imagine Binny!”



Our group of travelers having rested in the Similan Islands for several days, soon began their passage to the Maldives. They set their course and

began to share their impressions of the islands to pass the time.

“Well my friends! How did you like the Similan Islands?” Bin asked his fellow travelers.

“The octopuses are quite funny and very quick off the mark.” Ponty replied first with a laugh. “They have already set up a club called “Ride a manta in exchange for a massage.”

“Brilliant ideas are always in demand dear Ponty!” Bolly said modestly waving her wings.

She waited until her friends stopped laughing and added.

“One more thing, the dozens of new jokes that I heard will make our trip to the Maldives much more interesting.” Bolly the manta looked at her tailed companions smugly and added, “By the way, dear dolphins! You may not believe me but my series of jokes about a poor perch became the highlight of the year among all mantas in the Similan Islands.”

The dolphins laughed for several kilometers.

“Oh Bolly, now that’s news!” Geo said when he finally took breath. “What jokes do they like then?”

“Oh, the main character of the local jokes is a silly lobster” the manta replied cheerfully. “To tell the truth a lot of the stories about him are really funny. For example, there was a lobster...” Bolly launched into her repertoire of a whole new series of jokes.



A few days later our travelers almost ran into a huge grey object which had unexpectedly appeared and slowly swam up and blocked their way.

“What is that?” a surprised Geo asked his friends looking at the giant moving thing.

Everyone was stunned and kept silent.

“Perhaps this is a submarine.” Karen finally said. “I have only seen them a couple of times in photos but it looks like a submarine.”

“A submarine?” Bin asked her with interest. “Does that mean people also like to travel underwater?”

“Not really Bin” Karen replied a little sadly. “Submarines usually serve as military vehicles. They protect country borders and attack enemy ships during war.”

All the friends stopped and watched the giant iron object pass by and fade into the blue ocean.

“Yes Karen, you’ve already told us about many wars between people on earth.” Bolly the manta sighed in disbelief. “We understand that it is true but I find it so hard to believe that living creatures can kill their own kind just for the sake of some idea, power, wealth or out of hatred. It turns out that the human world is quite complicated...”

“Exactly Bolly!” Karen nodded. “That is one more reason why I am with you. I don’t want to

deal with all that nonsense. I want nothing to do with something that has no kindness, love or even common sense.”

“Let’s move on.” Bin said finally. “There are so many beautiful and interesting things in this world. Let’s look at them. We’ll leave those problems for their creators.”

“Great idea!” his friends replied and the group of travelers moved on.



After a few days, they saw the first palms of the Maldives. Before long our friends were swimming into a turquoise lagoon of a beautiful atoll. They had a rest after their long trip and then swam off to greet the local residents. This time Ponty persuaded Bolly do not disclose his massaging skills to the local mantas. He had no intention of giving a new seminar. In addition to mantas, there were also dolphins, turtles, various skates and even large whale sharks.

While Bolly, Ponty and Geo were busy talking to the marine residents of the Maldives, Bin and Karen headed off together and visited some of the beautiful local lagoons. They gamboled in the warm turquoise water and enjoying each other’s company. Sometimes they stuck their heads out of the water and looked at the tourists

walking along the beach or at over water bungalows jutting far out to sea. Sometimes Karen explained some of the things they saw to Bin. However, the majority of tourists were romantic couples so quite often special explanations were not required.

One day they saw a lone girl at the end of a long over water walkway. She was sitting on the very edge and looking at the sun setting over the sea. A pod of dolphins came close to her and the girl clapped her hands in excitement when she noticed them.

“Once you were just like her” Bin said looking at Karen with a smile when they swam away.

“Indeed, we do have something in common.” Karen agreed laughed cheerfully and added, “If she spends the next five or so years sitting there then sooner or later some sea prince will swim up to her for sure.”

“Or at least he will sneak up behind her along the walkway.” Bin put forward his own version.

Both dolphins laughed as they embraced each other.

“You know darling” Bin began after some time, “I can’t help it, but I often think that I deprived you of some very important part of your life when I took you away into the ocean.”

“You didn’t take me away Binny” Karen replied seriously. “This was my decision and I have never regretted it.”

Then she fell silent. Bin was beginning to worry when Karen suddenly spoke again.

“I did not want to tell you Binny, but I think it is better if I do...” she trailed off and looked intently into his eyes. “There was nothing else left for me on earth. You know what happened to my parents when I was a child. Several years ago, my grandmother who brought me up passed away. There is no one really left on earth that I long for...”

Karen’s voice trailed off, she sighed and went on.

“I didn’t think that I would ever tell you this but your concern for me leaves me no choice.” She lowered her eyes and continued, “The One Who sent me to you said that I could come back to earth if I really wanted to.”

Karen lifted up her head and looked sincerely at Bin.

“But I’ve never thought about it since that time. My heart and I are always with you Binny! This is my choice and it made me so happy, silly! You don’t need to talk or think about it.”

Surprised and happy Bin looked at his other half.

“It means that you can...”

“Yes, Bin! I can become a human again for an hour or even forever” Karen laughed and looked at him gently. “But I would have nothing to do on earth without you. Anyway, the sea has

always lured me. That is why I feel right at home here.”

“Wow!” Bin could only say. “That is great! It takes a great load off my mind.”

Suddenly he jumped into the air, turned over and happily plopped into the sea close to Karen. She playfully repeated his trick.

“That’s it Binny. The One Who helped us is very kind and very wise! He does not force us to do something if we don’t want to.”

The two dolphins then headed back, happily swimming so close together that they looked like a single double-tailed creature.

## The Red Sea



ur friends spent a few more days in the beautiful Maldives and then started another long passage. This time to the Red Sea.

“It’s a pity dear friends that I cannot amuse you with some new jokes.” Bolly the manta sighed as the last atoll of the Maldives vanished out of sight. “Everyone here repeats the same jokes that we heard in the Similan Islands.”

“Don’t worry Bolly!” Geo encouraged his friend. “I hope you will find some new material when we are closer to the Atlantic. After all there are not many lobsters in that area.”

The friends smiled.

“I hope so.” Bolly sighed in response.

Everyone fell silent for a while.

“It’s a pity that I wasn’t into jokes when I lived on land” Karen said warmly looking at the manta. “People know so many jokes.”

“Many?” Bolly’s eyes shone with interest. “How many?”

“A lot dear.” Karen smiled. “People even write books that are called “joke books”. Each book contains dozens or even hundreds of jokes.”

“Hundreds?” the manta slowed her motion. “You don’t say! And how many such books do people have?”

“Well I don’t know. Quite a lot I think. I remember at least five books inside the box on my beach and...”

Karen suddenly slowed down too.

“Box by the sea...Oh, Bolly!” she cried happily. “What if one night Ponty could crawl up to a box like that, bring the books into the sea and then leaf through them for me. I think they wouldn’t fall apart in the water over a few days and then...”

“Then our atoll will take first prize for the best jokes in the whole ocean.” Geo quickly caught her thought.

At that moment the manta began to glow with delight.

“And Mantas from all over the world will swim there to listen to Bolly’s new jokes” Bin caught up his friend’s idea.

“That is a little over the top Bin” Bolly smiled. “For me, half of all the mantas would be enough...”

Everyone burst out laughing. The manta sighed again.

“Too bad it will not be soon”.

Karen thought for a while.

“Perhaps not. Maybe we can find them at other hotels on our way? There are many tourist spots near the Red Sea. I will keep a look out to see if there are any boxes of old books and magazines on the beach. As a rule, there are many joke books inside. If I find something, I will write the titles down for Ponty — they will need to be written in my language. Then when night falls we’ll stand a good chance of getting them.

“Is it alright to steal other people’s books?”

“We won’t be stealing them Ponty” Karen smiled. “People put books that they have already read in such boxes so that others can read them too. It is just that we will be reading them under the water.”

“Well sweetie with you on this expedition the possibilities seem to expand considerably!” the manta regained normal speed again. “Thank you for your thoughtfulness and consideration.”

“You’re making too much out of it Bolly” Karen replied modestly. “We’ll all have more fun with new jokes.”

The friends moved on. Long passages were actually not that difficult for them as the dolphins and mantas could sleep in motion. Most of the time they swam at their average speed and usually stopped when they encountered someone on their way. In these deep waters they met chatty schools of tuna, barracudas, sometimes sharks and other dolphins. A couple of times they encountered whales and once they saw

a giant turtle. As it turned out she was swimming to her homeland to lay her eggs also.

All our travelers liked the change scenery, new locations and making new acquaintances. They had a lot of fun together and talked a lot about all sorts of different things. Sometimes they asked Karen about Atlantis or about the countries they were going to visit along the way.

Today they touched on one of these topics again.

“Karen,” Bolly the manta asked her with interest. “What do you think, could some Atlanteans have survived since those times?”

“My dear Bolly, in fact that is another mystery of mankind” Karen replied with a smile.

“Well it seems that the mankind has a collection of secrets” Geo said.

“I think you are very close to the truth.” Karen laughed and went on. “So, immediately after the disappearance of Atlantis, advanced civilizations began to appear in different parts of the world — in Mexico, Peru, Egypt, and Mesopotamia. Curiously enough they had much in common by way of architecture, traditions and religion. All of which was not dissimilar to that of Atlantis. For example, when people began building enormous pyramids in Egypt, at approximately the same time on the opposite side of the world the same thing was happening in Mexico. There are also cases of surprising similarity in different languages of some countries separated by the ocean and many other

interesting facts. All these distant and ancient civilizations worshipped the Sun god in a similar way and almost all of them created legends about a flood.”

“Well in my opinion, it is obvious that some Atlanteans managed to survive and travelled to different places around the world.” Geo surmised.

“That is quite possible.” Karen agreed. “Otherwise it would be difficult to explain so many coincidences in cultures and traditions of different people separated by the ocean. By the way, there are similar legends in Peru and Mexico about a white god who arrived on a sailboat from the east, who taught their tribes building and craftwork, laws and religion.”

“Well” Bin smiled, “maybe our little expedition will shed some light on this interesting conundrum.”

## ***Eleven thousand years ago***

*Supreme priest Aya gathered all his like-minded followers in a great hall inside the pyramid and closed the door.*

*“Atlanteans!” he proclaimed loudly. “My good and faithful Atlanteans! You who have not forgotten your responsibility to the One who sent us.*

*The time has come. In three days Atlantis will disappear underwater."*

*A sigh of dread echoed among the Atlanteans. After a pause Aya continued his speech.*

*"This is the will of God our Creator! We have not met His expectations and unfortunately we did not heed His final warning."*

*The supreme priest bowed his head. Then, he lifting it he looked intently into the faces of his friends.*

*"However God has completely different plans for us. He wants us to board ten different ships and sail to various far-off lands. Our God wants us to take the good seed, the one with which He once sent to us on earth and sow it in other human tribes."*

*The Atlanteans intently listened to the supreme priest's voice in silence as they were afraid to miss anything.*

*"My friends! Bring to people the best of that which we once had and..." supreme priest Aya tried to look into the eyes of every Atlantean, "never forget who we are and why we came to earth."*

*The priest then opened the window that overlooked the port and they could see the ten new sailing ships.*

*"Now go aboard, fifty in each ship and sail in different directions far away from this land. Atlantis will disappear underwater in three days" Aya trailed off. "and one more thing..."*

*for the first time, the Atlanteans saw tears in the eyes of their supreme priest, “Don’t forget to say goodbye to our beautiful home — the once great and glorious Atlantis.”*



A few days later our friends were swimming in the Red Sea. Seeing a huge number of bright corals made them happy. They have never seen them in such quantity and variety. The number of underwater inhabitants was huge too and our travelers chatted to them during their rest breaks.

While swimming in the sea our friends found several shipwrecks and one very strange construction — a giant half sphere standing on three legs. Karen explained that it was probably the famous underwater station of Jacques Cousteau, the inventor of a scuba, from which he conducted some underwater research.

“This thing reminds me of myself.” Ponty said thoughtfully carefully examining the construction. “But it is too large and it only has three legs.”

“Well Ponty, it is quite obvious that there were no octopuses to inspire its builders.” Bin smiled and our friends moved on.

Within a few days our friends began to encounter their first groups of scuba divers. Sometimes our friends swam past them and sometimes they

posed for them to the great delight of the divers and underwater photographers. Once Karen saw a girl that looked like her former self. She swam around her several times and then swam underneath her. The girl guessed correctly, took the dolphin's dorsal fin and Karen gave her a short ride around the stunned divers. She then gave her a cheerful good-bye and swam back to her friends.

"I think, that after today she will really love dolphins a lot." Bin grinned.

"It's very likely," Karen replied cheerfully and laughed. "but finding her own underwater Bin will require a lot more time and effort."

The friends smiled and continued their journey.

One day, Karen noticed something on the beach near a hotel. On closer examination it turned out to be a box with books and magazines. It was lying close to the water and Ponty would easily be able to reach it and crawl inside.

A plan was made to search for a joke book after sunset. At that time of day beach would be completely deserted. Karen used her flipper to draw the title of the desired book in the sand and Ponty who memorized everything very quickly repeated the title a couple of times. After that all there was to do was to wait for sunset. Bin and Karen decided to take stroll along the coastal reefs.

"You know, I am so happy since you said that you always were and always will be free to choose." Bin said looking gently into Karen's eyes.

“Little fool!” she replied and slapped his nose with her flipper. “But thank for loving me so much and caring about me.”

Karen then spun in a full circle and touched her nose against his.

“How can I not love you?” she looked into his eyes gently and contentedly. “You have everything that I always dreamt about after going to the theater and even more. It is I who should be worthy of you.”

Bin purred with happiness in a special way.

“Perhaps you’ll become a human for a while and get these joke books yourself?” he suggested later.

“Please Binny, do not tell anyone else about that.” Karen asked him. “I want to be just like everyone else. I like being a dolphin.”

Then she trailed off for a moment.

“Besides this is not a situation which requires that. It’s not a big deal and I’m sure that Ponty will manage splendidly. It will be fun!”

Bin laughed.

“Yes, I hope he’ll find this book. It is a great opportunity for Bolly and all of us to celebrate.”

“Well I hope he doesn’t find a cat taking a nap inside of the box.” Karen laughed. “I guess after something like that he would be off his food for a week or so.”

“Hey guys! Here you are.” They heard Geo’s voice behind them and turned around. “I have been looking for you everywhere. It’s time to go — everything is ready for the mission.”



“Let’s go, friends!” Bin smiled. “This is an event I don’t want to miss.”

Everything was going as smoothly as clockwork that night. As our friends had agreed Bin pointed his nose into the coast and Ponty climbed on his tail. The dolphin then flicked his tail up catapulting him through the air landing him near the box — the training earlier that day had paid off. The octopus quickly climbed into the box. Fortunately, there were no cats inside and he sorted through the contents for a while. After some time, Ponty was seen moving down the beach towards the sea. He victoriously held up a blue book with the correct title in his tentacle.

Fifteen minutes later our group of travelers were under a lantern at the distant end of a long pier laughing at the first joke.



A few days later the sea began to narrow and before long our travelers had swum into the Suez Canal. Karen didn’t know much about it. She only remembered that it was very long and connected the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea which effectively joined the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean.

The whole group was moving in the shadow of a large cargo ship in order not to attract attention

and swam to the very end of the canal in that way. When they finally reached the Mediterranean Sea they immediately felt a change in the water temperature — it was a little bit cooler than before. However, it was the middle of summer and the temperature difference was not significant. That was something. that Bolly the manta was really happy about. It was because of the low winter temperatures that her relatives did not live in these waters.

Once our friends were in the Mediterranean they began asking the dolphins they met on their way about local underwater cities. The first big underwater city was not far away. One dolphin had told them that people were conducting searches, investigating and lifting something out of the water.

“Perhaps they’ve already found Atlantis?” Geo supposed.

“Maybe” Karen said. “Let’s go there and take a look.”

It took them about an hour to reach the place. Our friends nearing their destination asked a school of perch for directions and were soon swimming into their first underwater ruins.

“Yup, this city is quite big” Bin said when they swam by several streets.

“And obviously ancient.” Karen replied. At the same time, she pointed at some sculpture. “I’ve seen sculptures like these in a history book when we studied ancient Egypt at school.”

They noticed a group of divers nearby who were fastening another sculpture with straps preparing to lift it to the ship above.

“The divers are already here.” Karen smiled and came up with an idea. “Hey guys, I’ll swim to their ship, lie on the surface near the deck and listen to their conversation. Then it’ll be clear whether this is Atlantis or not.”

“Great idea.” Bin said as his girlfriend swam upwards.

Within half an hour Karen had returned.

“No my friends this is not Atlantis for sure.” she said. “Two archaeologists were discussing this city and I listened to them for a long time. This is some ancient Egyptian city of Heraklion. It is also interesting but not really what we’re after. Besides people have for a long time known its whereabouts and nearly everything about it. One more thing — it is much younger than Atlantis.”

“Oh well that’s OK.” Geo said. “Let’s swim around anyway and see how ancient buildings looked thousands of years ago.”

The friends agreed and devoted the rest of the day to exploration.

Early in the morning of the next day they made their way to Greece. Karen had said people obtained most of the fundamental information about Atlantis from that country. Along the way she told her friends about some of the myths of ancient Greece that she had remembered from childhood — about

Hercules, Aphrodite, and Poseidon. Her friends listened to her with their mouths open and Bolly the manta concluded that only interesting and beautiful people such as the Greeks could write such stories.

By noon the next day our friends had already reached Greece's shoreline. They chatted with the local dolphins as usual and heard about another sunken city which was located nearby. They quickly made their way there, inspected some small ruins on the bottom and then floated to the surface. Fortunately, they noticed a billboard on the bank. Karen read that the city on the bottom was not Atlantis either but some other town named Kekova.

Despite quizzing quite a few underwater inhabitants our travelers learnt nothing new about underwater cities and progressed along the Mediterranean towards the Atlantic.

## Pizza



It was not long before they were swimming past the coast of Italy.

“Here it is — the birthplace of pizza!” Karen said emotionally looking at the coast.

“What do you think — does pizza taste better in its homeland than the one that we ate on your island?” Bin asked with interest.

“Why do you even ask?” she replied. “Of course. After all it is pizza’s homeland!”

Bin and Karen swallowed reminiscently.

“What is pizza? Is it really tasty?” Geo joined their conversation.

“Ahhh, my friend! What do you think? Would we otherwise be reminiscing about it now?” Bin said. “Pizza was my favorite dish on the island.”

“But you said that you loved me more...” Karen sighed.

A burst of laughter drowned out the rest of her words.

“What can I tell you my friends? I think it is most unlikely that we will be able to find pizzas in boxes

along the shore.” Ponty continued the conversation in a practical manner.

“Yup, such an idea is a fanciful joke.” Bolly the manta smiled.

Bin sighed.

“All right my friends. I suggest that you do not dream on an empty stomach and look for some fish instead.”

“Great idea.” Geo agreed and began to look around.

Only Karen kept silent for some reason. She struggled with her conscience then began to speak.

“All right, all right my friends!” she finally said loudly. “Let me share a secret with you that only Bin knows.”

Everyone stared at her with interest.

“I don’t think that having pizza is such a fantasy,” she went on, “when you consider that I can become a human for a time.”

“No way!” everyone exclaimed.

“It seems that our expedition is becoming more and more interesting!” Bolly the manta smiled broadly and folded her wings in form of a question mark. “Darling what we are waiting for then? That pizza advertisement whetted my appetite and my stomach is rumbling so loud that the whole ocean can hear it.”

“There’s only one problem.” Karen smiled. “We need money. Nobody would give me a pizza without money.”

“Hmm...” Bin thought for a bit. “Medky’s box is far away now and it will be difficult to find something like that on the sea floor here.”

“I’ve been thinking about it.” Karen said. “two good pearls would be enough for me to buy a pizza.”

“Well that is much easier” Bin and Geo replied and made ready to swim off into the depths. Ponty could open pearls shells, so they put him on Geo’s back.

Twenty minutes later they returned triumphantly. The octopus was holding two big pearls in his tentacles.

“Great” Karen smiled. “Now it will be better for me to lie down on the beach near the small town over there.”

She stuck her nose out of the water and smelled the air.

“Even from here I can smell excellent pizza” she said enthusiastically.

They made their way over to the shore, Karen ran herself up the beach and looked at her friends with a smile.

“Turn around, please! I don’t know what form I’ll take.”

She then lifted up her head up towards Heaven.



“Now you can look at me!” her friends heard a cheerful human voice a few moments later and they looked towards the shore.

The girl was standing in the same T-shirt and shorts that she wore the last day of her life as a person on earth. Karen happily held a credit card that she had pulled out of her back pocket.

“Hey friends, everything is much easier now.” she smiled. “With the help of this thing I can buy everything we need.”

Karen then bent down and she took the two pearls out of Ponty’s tentacles.

“I’ll give them to some little Italian girl. She will be happy and when she grows up she’ll bake the most delicious pizza.” Karen looked at her friends. “Wait for me here my dear companions. Pizza is coming!”

The girl headed off to the town at a lively pace.

An hour later, she was feeding her friends tasty pizzas and various Italian desserts. Ponty the octopus was helping out by breaking the pizza into pieces and sending them into his or Bolly’s mouth.

“And what is this wonderful thing?” Geo asked her as he ate a small chocolate ball that made him roll his eyes.





“It’s called a profiterole Geo. An Italian delicacy.”

“Oh, it so delicious! It drives me crazy!”

“Well Karen,” Bin smiled quite satisfied. “I agree that pizza does taste better in its homeland.”

After finishing their meal all the friends warmly thanked the girl.

“All right it’s time for me to come back to you!” Karen said and lay down on the shore, satisfied and happy. Then she looked up to the sky once more.

“Thank You!” the girl said and in a second became a dolphin once again.

## ***Eleven thousand years ago***

*Three days later, Atlantis began to sink underwater. In the midst of general panic, only one Atlantean standing on top of the temple, was absolutely calm and motionless. It was Aya the supreme priest. Tears were rolling down his cheeks. He did not want to sail away with the other gentle and kind Atlanteans. Even though the people that remained here had not listened to him recently, they were still his people.*



A few days later our friends were swimming along the coast of Spain toward the end of the Mediterranean Sea. They asked the local inhabitants about Atlantis, but with no results — nobody had heard about ancient underwater cities.

One morning Bolly the manta was talking to Karen.

“Darling tell me the truth. Don’t you want to go back to the world where you’ve lived for so many years?”

“No Bolly. Actually, I’m still surprised about that.” Karen said. “I began to understand that it is not a place but its inhabitants that make a person happy.”

“Hmm... I’m wondering about the time when you went to the city for a pizza - weren’t you interested at all?” Bolly smiled inquisitively.

“To be honest it was interesting for twenty minutes or so” Karen said with a laugh, “and then I began to miss Binny, you and my friends.”

“We missed you too” she heard a warm voice behind her.

“Oh don’t be so sentimental!” Geo reprimanded. “At this rate we won’t get to eat pizza anymore and we just got a taste for it...”

When our friends stopped laughing, Geo asked again.

“By the way Karen, what do people usually eat in Spain?”

“Frankly, I have no idea” she replied and added, “however there is good news — Italian restaurants are located all over the world and my credit card is also valid in any country.”

“That is wonderful news!” Ponty said quite emotionally.

“By the way” Karen smiled, “we will soon pass the wonderful island of Mallorca, where...”

“Guys, guys!” Bin suddenly interrupted her. “There is a large group of dolphins swimming nearby, let’s ask them about Atlantis.”

“All right Bin let’s go together.” Geo said with enthusiasm. “Otherwise soon we’ll be looking for Atlantis only around the shores Italy because of that pizza!”

The friends had a good laugh.

When the dolphins came back half an hour later, their eyes were shining.

“Have you found out something special?” Karen asked first.

“This time it seems so!” Geo said happily. “One old dolphin remembered that his father once told him something about a large underwater city somewhere near the Azores. It is only a few days passage away from here. He said that the city on the bottom is enormous. However, the dolphin did not remember any other details.”

“Wow! What news!” the manta smiled. “I’m sure that it’s exactly what we are looking for.”

Bolly looked deviously at Karen.

“Oh it would be so nice to celebrate this news...Darling, please, remind me the name of that island on our way.”

“Mallorca!” Karen and the rest of the group laughed at her not so subtle hint. “All right let’s swim there for pizza. By the way, this time I’ll have enough time to drop by a book store and buy a new joke book.”

“Oh darling you are my underwater angel!” Bolly said with genuine enthusiasm and hugged her with her wings.

## Atlantis



fter swimming for a couple more days our travelers saw the first island of the Azores archipelago on the horizon. It was not long before they were swimming into a cozy lagoon with crystal clear turquoise water.

“Finally we are nearly there my friends!” Bin said. “It took quite a long time to get here.”

“However our trip has been very interesting” Bolly the manta replied cheerfully, “and the good news is that we’re going to see Mallorca, Italy and many other beautiful places one more time.”

“I cannot find the words to describe our trip. It was incredibly fascinating!” Geo agreed. “It seems that a honeymoon was invented by a very clever person.”

“He must have been a romantic too.” Karen smiled. “Binny and I had a wonderful time together.”

“That’s true!” Bin replied. “But now we are very close to solving this mystery. So it’s time to find an answer to the question that brought us all together.”

Bin turned his head.

“Geo, what about you?” he asked his friend. “Do you want to swim around today and ask the local dolphins about Atlantis?”

“Yes I was just about to offer.” Geo replied. “I can’t wait to find the answer to this ancient question.”

“Why don’t you guys have a rest and explore a little,” Bin said to his friends, “while we go and scout around.”

Both friends then headed off around the island.

After a while they encountered four young dolphins. However, they could not tell them anything about the sunken city but told them where they could find a pod of adult dolphins. Our friends had just enough time to get there before sunset so they headed off.

Soon they heard the chatter of their own kind. A large pod of dolphins was swimming peacefully right in front of them. Our friends swam closer, said hello and told them where they had come from. This invoked some emotional exclamations.

“Well my friends you had one long trip.” one old dolphin addressed them. “Only a couple of my friends have ever ventured to your home. What made you come so far?”

“We’re looking for an ancient sunken city that is located somewhere near here. Our friend is really interested in it” Geo explained “and we are just keeping her company.”

“A sunken city?” the old dolphin frowned. “I have heard about it before... Wait a minute. Hey, Canni!”

Another adult dolphin swam over to his call and the first one asked him a question.

“Look, Canni, was it you who told me about some underwater city two days passage away from here?”

“Yes, it was me.” Canni smiled. “That city is very large and beautiful. There is also some unusual smooth mountain in the middle of it.”

“That’s it!” Bin drew in a breath. “Canni, would you be able to show us the way please?”

The dolphin thought for a second and replied.

“Yes no problem guys. I’m ready whenever you are. I’ll be happy to have another look at it myself.”

Bin and Geo poured out their thanks to Canni and the old dolphin, who merrily replied that they were always happy to help out their friends, especially those who had come from so far away.

They agreed with their new companion on a meeting point for the next day, said their warm goodbyes to the other dolphins and swam back to the lagoon with the good news.

When Bin and Geo told the news to their friends, the entire lagoon began to celebrate. Karen was deliriously happy.

“Oh you guys!” she exclaimed. “Is it real? I can’t wait to see the greatest legend and mystery of all mankind! I can’t believe it!”

“I think now you will have to believe it.” Bin replied with a happy smile.

When their excitement settled down the two of them swam off to the lagoon for stroll at sunset.

“Binny thank you for organizing such a long journey for me!” Karen said.

“No, I should thank you.” he smiled. “We all saw so many new and interesting things.”

Bin then carefully looked into her eyes and said, “And a special thank for you dear for becoming human again for us. For treating us with all these yummys.”

“It was my pleasure. I enjoyed it too.” she replied.

Karen laughed.

“Besides to be honest I love Italian cuisine.”

Bin and Karen laughed merrily and watched at the beautiful sunset as they embraced each other tenderly.



The next morning, they began a two-day passage to the sunken city with Canni. The weather was perfect and the local dolphin told them stories about the sunken city and the Azores Islands. As it turned out the waters there were brimming with mantas, whales, turtles, and other marine animals. The friends listened to Canni intently and the journey passed quickly and enjoyably.

At about midday on the second day, Canni told them that they were almost at the site. Following their guide our friends swam along a long an underwater ridge, went around a high rock formation and found themselves at the beginning of a large plateau. It was fairly deep but the sunlight was still able to penetrate and things were clearly visible. Our friends, taking in the marvelous view had no doubt whatsoever that this was Atlantis.

The underwater visibility was good enough that day for them to swim slowly between once majestic buildings and circular canals deep in the former island. Even eleven thousand years of being underwater could not erode the grace and majesty of the buildings, bridges and sculptures. Our friends moved their heads as if they were spellbound staring at the beautiful world of the ancient Atlanteans.

The architecture became even more beautiful in the city center. The houses were taller and more graceful. Even the grey color of the sea mud could not spoil the overall impression of prosperity and wealth. They could only guess how beautiful this city may have once been in its original colors under a full sun. Our travelers swam along delicate fountains with cozy marble benches, beautiful boulevards and gardens with unusual spiral columns, multi-faced sculptures and beautiful arches.



“Wow!” Karen said emotionally examining one of the multi-faced sculptures. “The design of these sail like caps and our Sydney Opera House are two peas in a pod!”

Soon, they felt that they had swum close to the very center of this once undeniably beautiful city. The buildings beyond yet another canal were even taller and our travelers could see a fantastic pyramid which stood like a mountain in the heart of the city. They could see stairs, balconies and different symbols in some places. Some of these reminded them of the letter “A”, some looked like a reversed “C”. The pyramid was so enormous that it seemed to stretch as far as their eyes could see.

They stood frozen for a few minutes in front of the incredible structure and began making their way up. Before long, they were examining the top section of the enormous building.

“Oh boy.” Geo said slowly and emotionally. “Even after several thousand years I can feel the former glory of these people. This is so beautiful and grand!”

“Unbelievable!” Karen agreed and pointed at some glowing cloud above the pyramid top. “What’s that over there?”

Bin looked in the direction she pointed and shrugged his flippers.

“I don’t know. Let’s swim over and take a look.”

The group moved slowly up to the very top of the pyramid. They saw something that seemed

unusual not only to Karen but to all her marine friends. The small cloud turned out to be a figure of a man illuminated from within. He was moving! Waving his hands in greeting and they saw a smile on his friendly face.

“Hello my dear travelers!” our friends heard a pleasant voice emanate from this unusual creature. The translucent man’s smile widened. “Welcome to Atlantis Bin, Karen, Bolly, Ponty and Geo! You are the first to find this land.”

The friends stood frozen in shock and did not know what to say.

“Hello!” Bin was the first to get his power of speech back. “Who are you?”

“I am Aya” the cloud man answered with a smile. “Long ago I was the supreme priest of this temple.”

“But...” Karen gradually began to produce sounds again. “Didn’t you die then?”

“Dear Karen!” the man said with a laugh. “Didn’t your grandmother tell you that all those who are good and kind live forever and that only evil dies?”

“Yes.” Karen answered very surprised. “How do you know that?”

“Oh it’s a long story! Actually it’s not that important. The main thing is that I know it.” the cloud man smiled again. “How do you like our Atlantis?”

“It’s beautiful!” Bolly the manta said emotionally and Ponty raised five tentacles to confirm what she

had just said. "It's easy to imagine how beautiful the city looked in the sun".

"That's true" the man said as the smile slowly disappeared from his face. "However a city's external beauty means nothing without the internal beauty of its inhabitants."

"So it's all true?" Karen looked into Aya's eyes. "Atlanteans became evil in the end?"

"Not all of them of course." the cloud man nodded. "However in general that's true. Otherwise why would God wipe out such a beautiful world?"

"It means that it's all true" Bin whispered and said after a while, "Aya, maybe we should tell people about the location of Atlantis?"

"What for?" the man shrugged. "If God had wanted it then people would have already found the city. If some time in the future it should suit His purpose then people will find Atlantis in an instant."

"Why doesn't He want them to find the city?" Karen said with surprise. "It would be beneficial for people to know that all evil on earth dies sooner or later."

"Unfortunately dear Karen your version of the reason why Atlantis was destroyed does not even rate in the top ten theories currently in circulation." Aya said with a sad smile. "People are more interested in proving that the disappearance of Atlantis was due to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, natural disasters, and so on. All they really want to find are

ancient treasures. Regrettably people today have no interest in examining moral issues.”

At this moment he cheered up.

“Besides even without Atlantis, a long time ago people were given very precise and incontrovertible information on how they should live their lives and how not to.”

“You mean...” Karen began to understand.

“That’s right dear! Two thousand years ago the Son of God told people everything they needed to hear. All those on earth who are pure of heart have discovered and retained this crucial information.”

“Is that the story you told me about what happened on earth a long time ago?” Bin asked Karen and thought for a moment. “Then I also have a question for you dear Aya.”

“I already know what you’re going to ask!” the man replied with a smile. “There is only one true God, Bin. It has always been that way. There is only one God on earth and underwater. However sometimes people give Him different names.”

Aya looked intently into Bin’s eyes.

“And He is very kind and loving! However, you and Karen may already know that.”

Bin nodded. Aya raised his hands.

“Goodbye my friends! Never lose that piece of the real Atlantis in your heart! Take care of it...”

Having said that the cloud man slowly dissipated.



A few days later our friends were ready to head home.

“Karen!” Ponty asked her on the last day. “How do people on earth usually finish up their honeymoon?”

“Hmm...” Karen thought for a while. “I don’t remember but I think they leave something as a memento in the place where they’ve been happy together.”

“What are we going to leave here as a memento?” Bin asked her with a smile.

“I don’t know.” Karen shrugged.

“I know!” Ponty exclaimed cheerfully.

He then quickly picked up a coral twig from the bottom and drew two joined tails on a stone.

“Very nice Ponty” Karen said with a smile. “Thank you.”

“I want to thank you too,” the octopus replied. “for bringing us to such an unusual and interesting place.”

Our friends then took one last long look at the beautiful sunken city and slowly began the journey home.

Unusual feelings flowed through them after their visit to Atlantis and their extraordinary acquaintance with the cloud man. They all felt that something new and very important had come



into their lives. Something that they had never had before. It was as if suddenly they had found a new friend about whom they could have only dreamt about before.

They didn't talk about it much at all. It was something that they did not want to discuss but just kept in their heart. They all had a feeling that their life had somehow been expanded and was now filled with new color and new meaning.

Our friends were slowly making their way home the same way they had come. Sometimes they ate pizza and often they met up with their new friends. As usual they were in no hurry. They just enjoyed swimming and each other's company.

Bin and Karen's honeymoon had turned out to be a very special honeymoon for everyone in their company.

## One Year Later



ona, Loony, we'll find you anyway!" Bin shouted loudly. For a quarter of an hour he, Karen and Medky the turtle were searching his friend's old shipwreck for two baby dolphins hiding inside — but it was all in vain.

"Well Bin," Medky smiled, "it seems that your children know how to play hide and seek better than we do."

"It seems so." Bin laughed. "Although I think that the reason is not that we play it poorly, it is just that originally this game was not designed to be played underwater."

"Oh Binny!" Karen smiled. "Stop making up excuses and go and look for our children."

Medky laughed when he heard Bin's reassuring response and continued the search.

"Well my friends, I think it's time for us to give up again" Bin said after ten minutes searching, then suddenly slapped his forehead. "Karen, Medky, how could I forget? Wait a second..."



He turned towards the open sea and began to call out.

“Dear Aya! Would you please help three of your not the luckiest of friends with one small problem?”

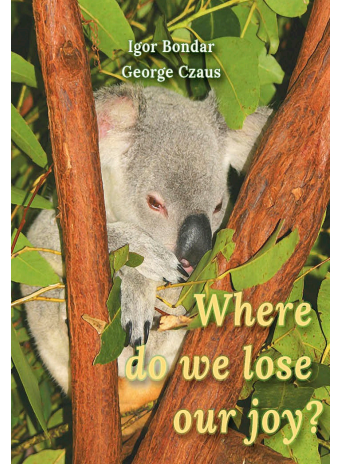
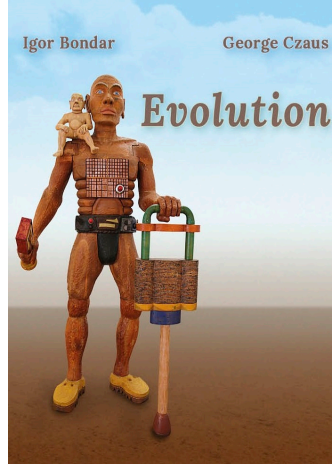
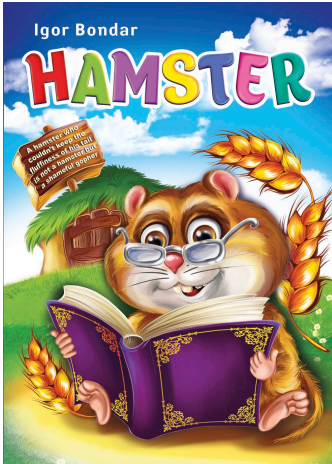
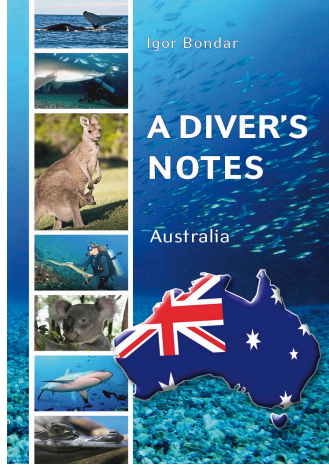
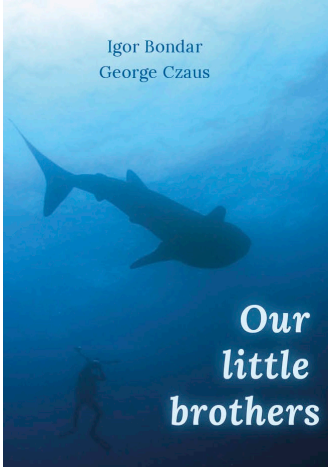
Bin has barely finished his phrase when he saw the cloud man in front of a ship’s bow. He laughed and pointed his finger at a small compartment in a secluded spot.

“Oh thank you dear Aya!” Bin thanked him with a smile. “Sorry for disturbing you.”

“I’m always glad to help out my old friends.” Aya said with a laugh and added, “Especially if their luck is so bad again. Say hello to Bolly and Ponty!”

After that, the cloud man waved his hand and disappeared. As for Bin, Karen and Medky, they slowly began crawling into the place where two little tailed tomboys were hiding.

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