

OUT OF THE BLU

A Science-Fiction Comedy Thriller

by Vitali Vitaliev

SAMPLE CHAPTER:

Chapter One (the Ks)

A Slight Turbulence

It all came – quite literally – out of the blue and cloudless sky behind the plane windows.

“Ladies and gentlemen, please fasten your seat belts: we are entering an area of slight turbulence!”

The voice of the captain on the intercom was cheerful, almost triumphant – as if he had just won a EuroMillions jackpot.

“They probably take a special crash course in how to make optimistic announcements when the plane is about to crash,” Viktor whispered to his wife Katherine, sitting next to him. He smiled at his own unintended pun.

“Not a good time to talk about crashes,” she remarked, sticking the end of her seat belt into the socket until it clicked.

“Come on, Kat! It is just a slight turbulence!” said Viktor, with an emphasis on “slight”.

“They always say ‘slight’ turbulence,” his wife retorted. “Have you ever heard them call turbulence anything but ‘slight’?”

Viktor and Katherine Petroff were returning from a short holiday in Majorca. It had been a tradition with the Petroffs to take a weekend or so off every two or three months, rather than embarking on a two-week-long beach or cruising holiday once a year and using almost all of their modest leave allocations in one go. Another reason for taking several shorter holidays rather than a long one was Sharik, their beloved black poodle, who did not like being left in the company of Katherine’s mother for more than a few days, after which he would grow uncharacteristically quiet, as if indeed depressed, and would spend his days sitting on the patio and howling almost non-stop.

Normally, the Petroffs would fly somewhere warm and seaside-ish: Italy, South of France, Greece or Turkey. But on that occasion they chose the Balearics, or Majorca to be more precise – the island that always had a special attraction for Katherine since her parents used to take her there often as a little girl. As for Viktor, whose roots were in the Russian North, the island, with its mild subtropical climate and warm sea, represented a suppressed childhood dream of a paradise on earth, the dream that had finally come true...

The Petroffs had had a relaxing long weekend in Port de Pollenca, with Katherine relaxing on the beach while Viktor, who hated swimming and sunbathing, read a book on their hotel room balcony facing the sea. Or took a bus to the ancient town of Alcudia where a spectacular Roman amphitheatre was being dug out by archaeologists. They would then meet up for lunch or dinner at one of the countless tapas restaurants lining the promenade. Five full days of such unhurried lifestyle were usually enough to relax them completely and make them forget about their UK routine, with Viktor working as a copywriter at a small advertising agency in the town where they lived, and Katherine commuting to London where she was a receptionist at the Moorfields Eye Hospital.

It all went well until that fateful lunch in a small seafood restaurant in Palma where they stopped on the way to the airport to catch an evening flight back home. Katherine got severe food poisoning from either prawns, or possibly scallops – they never found out. Minutes after the meal, she felt excruciatingly painful stomach cramps, followed by violent projectile vomiting. So severe were the symptoms that the Petroffs had to cancel their return flight and let Katherine recover first. They booked three nights at the lovely BonSol hotel in the outskirts of the city. The hotel had cosy air-conditioned rooms and its own little beach. After three days and nights of dieting and procrastination, Katherine was strong enough to travel again. In fact, she felt better than ever – rested and relaxed after that unexpected round of intensive body cleansing.

Halfway into their newly booked return flight to London Stansted, the captain announced an approaching “slight turbulence” and advised the passengers to fasten their seat belts.

The Boeing was tossed about in the sky like a lump of ice in a cocktail mixing glass of that mighty bartender called God. Some bags and suitcases fell out of overhead lockers, which sprang open like flick-knife blades, and down onto the passengers’ heads. Women were screaming...

Then it all suddenly stopped. The plane straightened up its course, and was floating smoothly through the deep-blue sky, interspersed with occasional tiny clouds...

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