

ONE-WAY TICKET.

Corey had been in many difficult situations in his life, but none as prestigious and potentially perilous as this one. He was to fly to Mars and back, courtesy of OAF, 'Orange Airborne Flights'. It was something that he had dreamt of since being a young child. Corey's parents were wealthy, so they had paid for his training. As he approached Base Bezos, he felt extremely nervous. He had never even been in a plane before and, as a child, had refused to go on roundabouts, making the excuse that he had had too much for dinner.

But Corey knew he had to do this. There was a young woman that he wanted to impress. Charlotte was her name, and Corey knew that none of the other young men would be able to impress her by boasting that they had been to Mars and back. Corey was apprehensive now, but he would be a hero when he returned.

Going through space-station customs, Corey confirmed that he 'had nothing to declare', instead focussing on the half-price perfume that he intended to bring back for Charlotte. Corey confirmed that he was An Earthling, and that he had not left the planet before. He affirmed that he had had the compulsory 'Martian jab' to protect him from any Martian-based Covid variants.

Having been through the statutory checks, Corey boarded the spaceship, to be pleasantly surprised to discover that his parents had paid extra, so when he entered, he turned left, to take up a seat which meant that he could watch Amazon Prime videos for free.

Corey put on his headphones, relaxed and listened to the words of the pilot. He began with a Health and Safety message, announcing that, in the event of a problem, they should not try to evacuate through a side door. The pilot then welcomed all aboard on their one-way trip to Mars, where they would be the first colonists.

'What?!'

Corey was shocked. He had expected to be on a return flight. Yes, Corey loved the idea of going down in the history books, but he wanted to be around to read them!

At that moment, a video message was broadcast to the whole plane. A strange orange man, who Corey first thought was a Martian, before recognising his face as a politician from the past, opened his mouth to declare himself as 'The greatest Earthling of all time', before informing the passengers that the flight would not be returning, due to budget cuts which were the fault of everyone but himself.

Corey, still in a state of shock, prepared himself for life on Mars, hoping that, at least, its red surface would offer him the chance to build sand castles in honour of Charlotte.

As Corey's head filled with regret, he looked over to one side. At that moment he saw the exquisitely beautiful face of another passenger, surrounded by her space helmet.

Hmm... perhaps Corey had not made a mistake after all.