

## **The Freighter Coralus**

*A Live Action Game for Eight People by Quentin Bourne*

### **Introduction**

You are the crew of the *Coralus*, a rickety old freighter carrying much needed relief supplies to a settlement on the planet Ithaca, which has been cut off by ion storms for the past year. You work for the Galactic Relief Foundation, a grand name for an organization which very much fails to live up to it. You're really just a handful of ancient ships who make runs to deliver donated goods to settlements in need.

Half an hour ago, your Maintenance AI warned you the ship's power core was over heating. You scrambled to shut everything down so you could wait for repairs, but something overloaded before you could manage.

Twenty minutes ago, the Maintenance AI told you that the engine room had flooded with radiation, and all bulkheads have been sealed for your protection because the radiation would otherwise kill you in a matter of hours.

Two minutes ago, the Maintenance AI informed you that safety protocols had failed catastrophically and that the only way to prevent the ship from being blown into space dust was for one crew member to manually vent the engines while another manually shuts them down at the same time.

The implications are not lost on you: for everyone else on the ship to survive, two of you must die.

The AI informs you that you have two hours until the engine explodes. You have two hours to decide.

### **The Crew:**

**Nem Devison:** The chairperson of the GRF, the founder and leader of this relief mission. Kind but preachy.

**Ronnie Vicks:** The pilot. Talks about their family a lot. Gruff but helpful.

**Quinn Mandler:** The mechanic. Doesn't talk about their family at all. Shy but strong-willed.

**Riley Colm:** General crew. A university student who joined the mission on their summer break. Smart but naive.

**Taylor Fenton:** A wealthy interplanetary businessperson. Signed on as temporary crew. Their company was recently at the centre of a scandal caused by unsafe working conditions. Charismatic but condescending.

**Halley Byers:** General crew. Everyone knows they have family on Ithaca. Determined but waspish.

**Gevny Pellar:** General crew. Close friends with Ashley, and has worked for the GRF before. Unfriendly but exceedingly competent.

**Ashley Wend:** General crew. Close friends with Gevny, and has worked for the GRF before. Quick to anger but quick to forgive.

**Mechanics:**

*The GM will read this out at the start of the game*

This is the only safe room on the ship. Anyone who leaves this room will die of radiation poisoning within an hour, and cannot return without poisoning the others. To leave the room, two safety switches have to be held down simultaneously to open the door, so for anyone to leave the room two other people must help them.

To save the ship two people will need to sacrifice themselves to fix the engine. The game will end either when a decision is made and two people exit through the door, or when time runs out and the ship explodes, killing everyone.

There is no combat mechanic. The in-game reason to avoid fighting is this: If the ship detects violence, it will inject a sedative into the air automatically to protect the crew from further attack until help can be found.

*GM instructions*

Read out the intro and above rules, then leave the players to their own devices for an hour. At the hour mark, play an explosion sound and have a recording of the Maintenance AI announce that there is now only 30 minutes left instead of one hour.

The game ends either when two people walk through the bulkhead or when an hour and a half passes and the ship explodes.

## **Characters:**

### **Riley Colm:**

You are a university student in your final year. It's summer break on your homeworld, and you decided to beef up your resume with some volunteer work before you have to go job hunting.

The relief mission to Ithaca was departing and returning during the two month break and a long haul space flight with a humanitarian objective would look great, so you signed up as general crew without hesitation.

The trip has been amazing! Space is incredible, you picked up a lot of experience from the pilot and mechanic, and it turned out that one of the other volunteers was Taylor Fenton, a wealthy and powerful interplanetary businessman who you managed to impress with your work ethic. They offered you a paid internship at their company a few days ago, starting as soon as you finish your studies!

You tried to make friends with everyone else onboard as well, with limited success. Quinn and Ronnie have both been pretty happy to show you the ropes, but you can tell Ronnie doesn't think you should be onboard. Nem is happy that you volunteered and happy to have you aboard, but is also kinda boring to talk to.

Then there's Ashley and Gevny, who are downright unlikeable, and Halley, who seems ok but is too caught up in worrying about their family to give you the time of day.

### **Quinn Mendler:**

You are the mechanic aboard the Coralus. You have worked for Nem and the GRF a few times before. It's a good gig. You get paid pretty decently, and you get to feel like you're doing something genuinely worthwhile with your life.

Feeling like you have worth is something you enjoy. Your family certainly never made you feel like you had any. For whatever reason, you never lived up to their expectations, no matter how well you did in school or sports or anything. When you told your parents you were training as a mechanic instead of a doctor they didn't speak to you for a month, and your older siblings needled you constantly.

The second you got your certification you took a job on a cargo ship and haven't been home since. You jumped from job to job for a long time before landing with the GRF. You quite like Nem, because they always show appreciation for your hard work, but your favourite crew member is Ronnie, the pilot. They've been doing this job for years and years and have a family of their own, but they're a good parent, unlike yours. Constantly talking about how proud they are of their kids for even the tiniest achievement.

As much as you try not to rely on anyone too much, you've come to lean on Ronnie for emotional support. They seem pretty happy to provide that, and they're teaching you the basics of piloting.

The rest of the crew you don't spend much time with. Riley the student is eager to learn, but you're not sure how to deal with how enthusiastic they are. Ashley and Gevny are hard to talk to, Taylor is a rich corporate jerk, and Halley is too caught up in their own worries.

**Nem Devison:**

You are the founder and chairperson of the Galactic Relief Foundation. You were frustrated by the lack of official aid the colony worlds receive, and took matters into your own hands. You live off what donations you manage to squeeze out of rich folk and large corporations, and have a small fleet of second hand ships which you send off with essential supplies whenever a colony world needs help. There are other people who are part of the GRF, of course, but you're the glue that holds it together. Without you as a driving force, you know it would fall apart.

Ithaca is a big one; cut off by ion storms for almost exactly a year, the colonists must be running short on nearly everything. Since the storms died down they've managed to get a few communications through, but they're only staticky requests for aid. You haven't got any solid information about what supplies they need, so you loaded up your largest ship, the Coralus, with everything you could think of and put together a crew on short notice.

Ronnie the pilot and Quinn the mechanic have both worked for you often before and are good at what they do. You had to ask Ronnie to take a two month job as a favour, since they don't like being away from their family for long hauls as much as they can avoid it.

Gevny and Ashley are survivors. One of your GRF missions picked them up on a world that had supposedly been abandoned after a heavy meteor fall destroyed most of its infrastructure. They had been stranded alone for three whole years. You don't blame them for being a little... emotionally volatile. You offered them both a job, since you knew they hadn't managed to get back on their feet, so you have them along for the trip. They're both hard workers but they haven't meshed well with the rest of the crew.

Riley is an enthusiastic student volunteer. Taylor is an unenthusiastic volunteer who you suspect is just here to help fix their company's ailing reputation, but they made a pretty hefty donation to the GRF, so you're not complaining. Halley volunteered because they have family on Ithaca that they're concerned for. You didn't really need an eighth crew member, but you let them sign on because you can understand them wanting to get to Ithaca as fast as possible.

**Ronnie Vicks:**

You are a career pilot who has been flying various freighters and long haul rigs since you were eighteen. You met your partner on a six month cargo run, but now they live onworld with your three kids, since you both agreed that the kids needed a stable environment to go to school. You've been taking shorter jobs ever since, trying not to be away from home for more than a couple of months.

You always send as much of your pay as you can afford back to the kids. Your partner hasn't been able to find steady work because their only job experience is fixing spaceships, so the family has been a bit tight on money ever since they settled down.

You've worked for Nem often before. They're a good person, and you respect them.

Unfortunately their bleeding heart sometimes leads to poor crew choices. You've got Halley onboard, who doesn't know a thing about spaceflight but has family on Ithaca, you've got Ashley and Gevny, who are experienced but somewhat volatile and thus unreliable, and you've got Riley, who is just a kid. They work hard and are a fast learner, but no one that young should be stuck in space for two months on an old rust bucket like the *Coralus*. Poor kid must be missing their friends and family like crazy.

And then there's Quinn. Quinn is the ship's mechanic, and damn good at their job, but you can tell they've had a hard life. You suspect maybe they escaped from a bad family situation. You've kind of taken them under your wing and have been teaching them the ropes.

All in all, it's a good crew, but not the most reliable or experienced.

**Gevny Pellar:**

You and Ashley are from the same world. You both worked on a mining rig off the coast, and when a meteor storm hit your world the population was mostly evacuated. Almost everyone else made it off the rig, but you and Ashley stayed behind to keep the rig stable long enough for the shuttle to depart, accepting that you were going to die a hero.

But then you didn't die. You and Ashley found emergency supplies, you scavenged the rig and managed to make a boat to get back to the mainland, and then you managed to scavenge the meagre food stores left on the planet. You lived there for three years before you were picked up by a relief mission, who had been passing the planet to help a colony in the next star system over.

But you had nothing. The government of your homeworld no longer existed. Even just getting your ID tags reproduced was a nightmare of bureaucracy. After the hell you escaped on your homeworld, you ended up scavenging again just to get by.

Then Nem, the founder of the GRF, who had been the ones who finally found you, heard about your situation and offered you jobs. You weren't keen on the idea of working in space, heading to dangerous locations, but it was your only option. You and Ashley both agreed, and you promised each other you'd keep each other safe, just like you had on your homeworld.

You don't spend much time with the rest of the crew. They all seem like decent enough people, but you're used to relying only on Ashley, and you don't like the idea of putting your faith in anyone else.

**Ashley Wend:**

You and Gevny are from the same world. You both worked on a mining rig off the coast, and when a meteor storm hit your world the population was mostly evacuated. Almost everyone else made it off the rig, but you and Gevny stayed behind to keep the rig stable long enough for the shuttle to depart. You knew you would die, but it was worth it to save everyone else. But then you didn't die. You and Gevny found emergency supplies, you scavenged the rig and managed to make a boat to get back to the mainland, and then you managed to scavenge the meagre food stores left on the planet. You lived there for three years before you were picked up by a relief mission, who had been passing the planet to help a colony in the next star system over.

But you had nothing. The government of your homeworld no longer existed. Even just getting your ID tags reproduced was a nightmare of beaurocracy. After the hell you escaped on your homeworld, you ended up scavenging again just to get by.

Then Nem, the founder of the GRF, who were the ones who had rescued you, heard of your situation and kindly offered you a job. You jumped at the chance. They had saved your lives, and you wanted to help others the same way. You and Gevny both signed on, and you promised each other you'd always keep each other safe, just like you had on your homeworld.

You don't spend much time with the rest of the crew. They all seem like decent enough people, but you're used to relying only on Gevny, and it's hard to trust others after everything the two of you went through.

**Taylor Fenton:**

You are the CEO of a very successful interplanetary business. Recently your company suffered an unfortunate accident in one of your factories which apparently stemmed from poor safety practices. Reporters got wind of it, and you were suddenly in the middle of a PR nightmare. You very publicly joined this little 'humanitarian mission' and made a large donation to the cause to try and mitigate the damage to your company's reputation, to be seen doing good and helping others, etc.

The journey hasn't been too bad. The reception out here is terrible, so most of the time you have peace and quiet from the stresses of running a business, and you finally caught up on all the reading you've been meaning to do.

One of the crew, Riley, is an enterprising young student who volunteered on the mission on their summer break. You're impressed by their work ethic and how quickly they pick things up, so you offered them a paid internship once they finished university. You don't think you've ever seen anyone more excited about a minimum wage job. They'll definitely be a valuable employee someday.

The rest of the crew is... well. Not exactly top of the line. An old pilot, a young mechanic, some random extras. Halley is the only one of them who stands out. They're here because they have family on Ithaca who they're worried about. You admire the kind of bravery it must take to leave their job and fly all the way out here, preparing the whole time for what might have come of their family.

**Halley Byers:**

When news arrived of the ion storms around Ithaca clearing you immediately quit your job and signed onto the first ship you could find that was heading in that direction. You joined the *Coralus* relief mission as general crew because your sister and her family are on Ithaca, and you have been worried sick about them ever since the ion storms cut off communication. You still haven't heard from them. Communication is up to some extent; all that's coming through are staticky requests for help. You can't get in touch with your sister, so you're just going to have to go to Ithaca to find her yourself.

Nem, the chairperson of the GRF and the leader of the relief mission, didn't hesitate to add you to the crew. They understand how worried you are and welcomed you aboard.

This was the only relief mission departing to help Ithaca. Even if you can't find your family, you feel that you owe Nem a great deal just for their willingness to try to help you and your family when no one else would.

You haven't spent much time with the rest of the crew. There's a student and a businessman onboard who you feel aren't taking this mission seriously, and are just using it as an opportunity to look good. The pilot and mechanic seem like good folk, as far as you can tell. The other two crewmembers, Ashley and Gevny, just aren't that friendly. You don't know why they're here, and are unsure of their motivations.