

RTFM

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Characters: Major Tom (MT), male astronaut

Ground Control (GC), male

Props: Protein bar, control panels, helmet, manual in a big loose-leaf binder

Setting: MAJOR TOM is at Stage Right chewing leisurely on a protein bar, separated from GROUND CONTROL at Stage Left

GC: Ground control to Major Tum.

MT: It's "TOM", not "Tum!" How many times do I have to tell you that?

GC: Irritable today – did you take your protein tablets?

MT: Yes. (under his breath) Protein bar is the same thing.

GC: Protein bar is NOT the same thing. We gave you tablets for a reason.

MT: They taste chalky. (starts putting helmet on) In answer to your next question, my helmet is on.

GC: Engines are on. Did you check ignition?

MT: You just said the engines are on – doesn't that imply that ignition is on?

GC: No, there's a difference – I can't believe you don't know that at this stage of the mission.

MT: Hey, all this science I don't understand.

GC: Perhaps you should try and RTFM.

MT: (clueless) RTFM...uh, yeah, I'll get on that...

GC: Read the freakin` manual. So do you really not understand the science or do you just like quoting Elton John?

MT: Bernie Taupin, actually. A little of both, I guess.

GC: Important information in it! Could save your life.

MT: I dunno -- learning about "lift" and "thrust" was a real drag. But ok, I see here that we have ignition.

GC: May God's love be with you – um, I guess I'm still allowed to say that – right, you're not offended by that, right?

MT: No, I'm cool with it, GC. May God's love be with you too.

GC: I know we've had our differences and I'll be honest – I really thought you'd wash out of the program.

MT: Well, my dad is a senator on the right sub-committee so I was pretty confident that I wouldn't. Good thing we don't have term limits, eh?

GC: But this time you've really made the grade.

MT: I'm still being graded on this? Sounds pretty pass/fail to me. Either I come back alive or I don't.

GC: My way of saying "good job."

MT: That's right, you're from England.

GC: No, I'm not – I just like to say "blimey" if something goes wrong – nobody gets cheesed off that way and chicks dig it. Social media is all abuzz about whose shirts you wear.

MT: What? The one time I wore my wife's shirt was because it was the only thing clean at the time and I was running late. Who starts a meeting right at 9 AM?

GC: Oh. We were hoping to promote the "first cross-dresser in space" angle. The public being a bit jaded and all...

MT: I'm not a cross-dresser!

GC: Hey, what you do in your personal time is your business. We support you. So how are you feeling?

MT: A little annoyed at being called a "cross dresser!"

GC: This is Ground Control to Major Tum.

MT: Tom!

GC: We need an official status report – something we could give to the media -- how are you feeling?

MT: This is Major TOM to Ground Control – I'm floating in a most peculiar way.

GC: Undergarments riding up on you?

MT: And I can't reach them.

GC: That's why we did all those drills on weightlessness. You didn't take a single Pilates class did, you?

MT: No.

GC: Yoga?

MT: Please. Not right after a protein bar.

GC: YOU thought they were a waste of time but now you see the gravity of blowing them off, don't you? So why DID you join the space program in the first place?

MT: Grad school wasn't going well and I just needed to clear my head. Gain perspective.

GC: So, what do you see?

MT: The stars look very different today.

GC: That's not much of a report. We can't be telling taxpayers that their money went to fund a project where we learned "the stars look different in space." We all figured that.

MT: Planet Earth is blue. Happy?

GC: Not any better. We all know that.

MT: Well, there's nothing I can do. It's all I've got for now. You know, you sound like my wife always pumping me for details – (changes into high voice) "Is it gloss or is it semi-gloss?" (back to regular voice) Whatever! (beat)... Aw, that's not fair to her – she's really great -- tell her I love her very much.

GC: Roger that, Major Tum.

MT: TOM!

GC: I took the liberty of telling her that on my way in.

MT: But she's at home. It's her turn to bring snacks for the soccer team.

GC: Oh, I just told this blond bombshell that I ASSUMED was your wife since she said she was here to see you.

MT: That's not my wife! This is how rumors get started.

GC: Girlfriend, then? Hey, what you do in your private life is not our concern.

MT: No, Monica is a girl and a friend – but not (coughs on protein bar) my girlfriend!

GC: What's that... you're breaking up....

MT: My wife and I are not breaking up!

GC: Are you eating candy over the instrument panel?

MT: No.

GC: Sounds like you are.

MT: It's a protein bar. So it's sanctioned.

GC: So she's not your girlfriend?

MT: What's with the third degree here? I already told you that...

GC: Pretty hot.

MT: You think so? She's not really my type.

GC: No, your intake manifold is running hot.

MT: Uh...

GC: The square thing above your head.

MT: (feels above his head) This doo-hicky? It feels ok to me.

GC: Check the GAUGE – the numbers are hot – high – in the red zone?

MT: Just a smidge -- is that bad?

GC: Ground Control to Major Tom – your circuit's dead. Is there something wrong?

MT: You tell me!

GC: Can you hear me, Major Tum?

MT: Tom! I hear you fine!

GC: But your circuit's dead.... blimey!