

A rocket, launched yesterday from a private site in northern China, is missing. Yesterday the Internet was alive with rumours of a secret manned space mission. Today NASA and the Russian Federal Space Agency both confirmed that a rocket did take off but denied it was theirs. The rocket entered high orbit and then disappeared into 'deep space'. No manned rocket has left Earth's orbit since Apollo 17 in 1972.

i am not exactly in the lake district

Mum, Dad – if you're listening – you know I said I was going to the South Lakeland Outdoor Activity Centre with the school?

To be completely honest, I'm not exactly in the Lake District.

To be completely honest, I'm more sort of in space.

I'm on this rocket, the Infinite Possibility. I'm about two hundred thousand miles above the surface of the Earth. I'm all right . . . ish.

I know I've got some explaining to do. This is me doing it.

I lied about my age.

I sort of gave the impression I was about thirty. Obviously I'm more sort of thirteen-ish. On my next birthday.

To be fair, everyone lies about their age. Adults pretend to be younger. Teenagers pretend to be older. Children wish they were grown-ups. Grown-ups wish they were children.

It's not like I had to try very hard, is it? Everyone always thinks I'm older than I really am, just because I'm tall. In St Joan of Arc Primary the teachers seemed to think that height and age were the same thing. If you were taller than someone, you must be older than them. If you were tall and you made a mistake – even if it was only your first day – you got, 'You should know better, big lad like you.'

Why, by the way? Why should a big lad know better just because he's big? King Kong's a big lad. Would *he* know the way to the toilet block on his first day at school? When no one had told him? No, I don't think he would.



Anyway, a few hours back the Infinite Possibility was supposed to complete a routine manoeuvre and basically it didn't. It rolled out of orbit, wrecking all the communication equipment, and now I'm very lost in space.

I've brought this mobile phone with me – because it's got pictures of home on it. It's also got an audio-diary function. That's what I'm talking into now. Talking makes me feel less lonely. Unless you get this message you won't know about any of this because this is a secret mission. They said that if it goes wrong they're going to deny all knowledge of it. And us. There's five of us on board. The others are all asleep.

Can you believe that, by the way? We're in a rocket, spinning hopelessly out of control and into Forever, and what is their chosen course of action?

A nap.

When we got the manoeuvre just slightly wrong – just slightly enough to make us completely doomed – they all screamed for about an hour and then they dozed off.

I can't sleep. I can't get comfortable in sleeping bags because they're always too small for me.

Plus I think if I stay awake I might have an idea. And save us all. That's why I'm recording this on my Draxphone. If I do get home, I'm going to give it to you and then you'll understand how I ended up in deep space when I said I was going pond dipping in the Lake District.

If you are listening to this though, and you are not my mum and dad, you are probably a pointy-headed, ninety-legged, sucker-footed alien, in which case, can I just say, 'Hello, I come in peace. And, if you happen to have the technology, please post this phone to:

Mr and Mrs Digby – 23 Glenarm Close, Bootle, Liverpool 22, England, The Earth, Solar System, Milky Way, et cetera. If it's not too much trouble.'

