

Writing Sample B (excerpt from D. Schneider, “Ad Astra Diplomacy,” IEEE Spectrum, p. 6, Jan. 2018.)

(1) In the 2015 science fiction blockbuster *The Martian*, the United States makes a rushed effort to send life-sustaining provisions to its marooned astronaut on the Red Planet. (2) Alas, the attempt fails when NASA’s resupply rocket explodes shortly after liftoff. (3) But officials with China’s national space program save the day when they offer the services of a previously secret Chinese rocket that is capable of ferrying the needed materials.

(4) *The Martian* movie and the book on which it is based have been hailed for their many realistic technical details. (5) One that got glossed over in the movie, though, was a U.S. law that prevents NASA from engaging in any form of bilateral cooperation with China without prior congressional approval. (6) And if Congress of 2035 remains anything like the present-day Congress, the notion that it could quickly pass a measure reversing that ban, even to save poor starving Matt Watney, strains credibility.

(7) Maybe we ought to start preparing for such eventualities right now. (8) After all, China is growing increasingly active and capable in space exploration, as will be evident to you after you read about its upcoming plans to investigate our celestial neighbor in “China Promises the Moon,” in this issue.

(9) Later this year, China will likely try to make the first-ever touchdown on the lunar far side, which will require putting a satellite in orbit about the moon to relay signals to and from the lander. (10) And soon afterward, China plans to retrieve lunar samples and return them to earth, a feat that hasn’t been carried out for more than 40 years (the last to do it was the former Soviet Union, by the way).