

## For a Seat at the Table

A senior US diplomat is seated in the back of a black limousine, on the road in downtown Muscat. He is feeling pretty good about himself. Oman has leveraged its oil wealth to become a major player in moon exploration, and he, along with co-host Oman, has engineered a meeting between the major stakeholders to hammer out a treaty governing lunar exploitation. The diplomat is on the way to that meeting. Key to his plans is a table he has arranged to be in place in the meeting room. It is made of mirrored formica, so that the participants will reflect on their motives as they negotiate. It is small so that everyone will work shoulder to shoulder, because they are seated shoulder to shoulder. The diplomat's reveries are broken by a sudden realization: The table is too small! The diplomat forgot about Oman's insistence that China have a seat at the table. He calls out to the driver to stop the car. They must get to a mall to purchase a leaf to add to the length of the table and accommodate China! But the driver speaks no English and ignores him. Visibly shaken, the diplomat scribbles a quick note and hands it to his interpreter to pass on to the driver to instruct him on what they must do before proceeding to the meeting: "Wants mall stop for Oman. Want China leaf (formican)".

