

THE DISTANCE OF THE MOON
original story by Italo Calvino

screenplay by Jae Song

EXT. THE ZINE CLIFF - NIGHT

Sounds of waves gently rapping can be heard. Reflections of a dim light sparkling on top of the water can be seen.

QFWFQ, a young sad-eyed boy, sits on a ridge high above the sea. His dog lies next to him. Qfwfq looks out into the sea as the dim light grows brighter and brighter.

QFWFQ (V.O.)

At one time, according to Sir George
H. Darwin, the Moon was very close to
the Earth.

We now see the ocean brightly luminated by a beautiful enormous full MOON. Qfwfq stares unmoved, until a melody from a harp begins to ring throughout the air.

QFWFQ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Then the tides gradually pushed her
far away: the tides that the Moon
herself causes in the Earth's waters,
where the Earth slowly loses energy.

At the sound of the harp, he springs to his feet and dashes across the ridge towards a tiny house, his dog close behind.

INT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Inside the tiny house lies Qfwfq's cousin, the DEAF ONE, a carefree youth, asleep.

Through an open window, white moonlight slips across the room, gliding towards the Deaf One's outstretched hand. When the light touches his finger, the Deaf One opens his eyes and greets the Moon with a smile, just as Qfwfq bursts in.

EXT. THE DOCK - NIGHT

Qfwfq races down, his cousin loping clumsily behind him to a boat with a small crew preparing to shove off.

Qfwfq leaps nimbly into it, his cousin stumbling at the edge as he mis-times his jump, slamming into the side of the boat. The other sailors grab his arms and hoist him inside.

INT. / EXT. THE BOAT - NIGHT

CAPTAIN VHD VHD, a large burly teddy bear of a man, yells out.

CAPTAIN

Come on you lazy dogs, row.

The crew rows hard. The Deaf one rows furiously with a smile lifted to the Moon they're chasing.

Next to him Qfwfq rows absentmindedly, his eyes on the front of the boat, where MRS. VHD VHD, the captain's wife, a woman of a rare other worldly beauty, strums on her harp.

INT. / EXT. THE BOAT - NIGHT

Qfwfq's reverie is interrupted by the excited shouts of the sailors. He looks up to see the Moon looming above them.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

Beneath the giant satellite the sea rolls, reaching up in tremendous waves towards the Moon's light. Jellyfish, strands of seaweed and sea medusas, attracted by the Moon's pull, break from the water and hang swirling in the air.

INT. / EXT. THE BOAT - NIGHT

The Captain shouts instructions and the sailors scurry about the boat, hoisting up a long ladder in the center of the deck.

One sailor immediately scrambles up to the top of the ladder, only a few feet below the Moon's surface. He stretches his arms up scrambling for a firm hold on its scaly rocks. One hand catches, and he pulls himself up and crashes onto the Moon.

Qfwfq takes his turn up the ladder, pausing halfway up only to glance down a moment at Mrs. Vhd Vhd then leaps and lands in a heap on the Moon.

The Deaf One, with his face beaming, glides up the ladder. Once at the top, he loses all his earthbound clumsiness and stretches his body, arms swung out.

With the slightest push, he leaps into a swam dive and as his body turns and finishes his arc, instead of falling to the sea, he starts to float upwards, feet first. He lands on the Moon perfectly on his feet.

Mrs. Vhd Vhd watches his every twist and turn spellbound.

EXT. THE MOON - NIGHT

Qfwfq and the other sailors shake their heads in admiration. The Deaf One pays no attention. In ecstasy he bounds about the surface of the Moon, practically dancing.

In certain spots he dips a hand down under a rock and scoops out a creamy handful of Moon-milk. Qfwfq and the others follow him around, picking the Moon-milk.

INT. / EXT. THE BOAT - NIGHT

Down on the boat, the Captain smiles.

CAPTAIN

The buckets, get the buckets!

The sailors on the boat pick up buckets and hold them out over the side of the boat.

EXT. THE MOON - NIGHT

Up on the Moon, Qfwfq and the sailors take heaping spoonfuls of milk and catapult them into the sky.

Another sailor collects the floating milk in a bucket and hauls it into the boat.

The Deaf One takes a spoonful of milk and with a sweeping gesture of his hand sends the milk flying directly into one of the buckets on the boat.

INT. / EXT. THE BOAT - NIGHT

All the sailors cheer. Mrs. Vhd Vhd gazes wistfully up at him dancing across the Moon and smiles.

EXT. THE MOON - NIGHT

Qfwfq and the other sailors finish gathering up the Moon-milk and prepare to return to Earth.

They take a running leap off of the Moon, diving towards the boat.

INT. / EXT. THE BOAT - NIGHT

As the sailor glides down to the boat, the men on the boat take hold of their arms and help bring them back down to the deck.

Qfwfq glides close, but the Moon's pull on him is still strong, and he begins to float back up to it.

All the sailors, including the Captain, and the Mrs. Vhd Vhd grab at his arms, pulling and tugging to bring him back to Earth.

SAILORS

Hold on! Hold on!!!

Among all the arms reaching for him Qfwfq finds Mrs. Vhd Vhd's and holds tight. Using her body he climbs back to Earth and with his feet back on the deck and his arms around her waist, he turns to smile at her.

Mrs. Vhd Vhd however is staring anxiously up at the Moon, where the Deaf One finally reappears.

EXT. MOON - NIGHT

Making no haste at all, he somersaults forward and springs off of the Moon's surface with his hands.

INT. / EXT. BOAT - NIGHT

As he drifts back towards the boat feet-first, the Captain's wife is the first to rush to him.

As all the sailors surround him, grabbing at his legs and dragging him to the deck, Mrs. Vhd Vhd presses herself tightly against him, holding him fast.

Qfwfq looks sadly at Mrs. Vhd Vhd, her face beaming up at his cousin, who in turn smiles up at the Moon.

The Captain hands Mrs. Vhd Vhd her harp.

CAPTAIN
Play us back home. 'Til next month...

Mrs. Vhd Vhd takes her harp and begins to strum.

Qfwfq sings:

QFWFQ
Every shiny fish is floating, floating
And every dark fish is at the bottom,
at the bottom of the sea...

Everyone else on the boat joins in the song, except for the Deaf One, who, unhearing, watches the Moon as it rolls away from the sea.

EXT. THE ZINE CLIFFS - NIGHT

The Moon bobs past the ridge, again approaching the sea.

Qfwfq's tiny house is empty, it's door swung open.

EXT. THE DOCK - NIGHT

Qfwfq's dog sits on the edge of the pier, watching Captain Vhd Vhd's boat push off to chase the Moon once again.

EXT. THE OCEAN - NIGHT

The ladder is already up, and several sailors already on the Moon. Qfwfq stays on deck, his eyes on Mrs. Vhd Vhd. She watches the Deaf One, the last one up.

When he finally leaps from the top, she glares jealously at the Moon.

CAPTAIN
The buckets boys!

The rest of the sailors begin to gather the buckets, when Mrs. Vhd Vhd leaps to her feet.

MRS. VHD VHD
I want to go up there too!

All the sailors, Qfwfq especially, turn to her wide eyed. The Captain laughs and pushes her to the ladder.

CAPTAIN

Go ahead then!

Qfwfq climbs behind Mrs. Vhd Vhd, helping her up the ladder. When she reaches the top, she begins to float up to the Moon.

Just as she drifts free from his helping hand, Qfwfq starts to rush after her.

QFWFQ

I'm going up for awhile too...

A firm hand grabs Qfwfq's leg from below.

CAPTAIN

You stay here, you have work to do.

Qfwfq climbs back to the deck and grabs a bucket.

EXT. MOON - NIGHT

Mrs. Vhd Vhd lands on the Moon just as the Deaf One disappears, frolicing off into the hidden zones. She crosses back and forth across the scaly rocks, looking for him.

INT. / EXT. BOAT - NIGHT

On deck, the Captain grins, takes a swig from a flask hidden in his jacket, and lights up a stinky pipe.

EXT. MOON - NIGHT

The sailors on the Moon begin catapulting moon-milk down to the boat.

To their surprise, none of the tosses reach the water; no matter how hard they throw, all of the milk crashes back to the Moon.

The sailors look confusedly at each other and then turn as one to look with scared eyes to the boat.

SAILORS
The Moon's going away!

EXT. MOON - NIGHT

As their cries end, the Deaf One bounds out from the hidden zones, in no particular rush, and somersaults off of the moon.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

At the height of his jump however, just when he should begin to fall towards the boat, the Deaf One just floats there, stuck between the Moon and the Earth.

Slowly he begins to swim through the sky, laboring to make his way down to the sea. Finally he comes close enough for those in the boat to grab him, and they pull him down to the deck.

EXT. MOON - NIGHT

Watching the Deaf One's troubles from above, the sailors on the Moon drop their milk-spoons and begin leaping into the sky.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

The distance is too great for them though, and they just hang in the middle of the sky, flapping their arms and crying.

CAPTAIN
Cling together! Cling together idiots!

The sailors grasp frantically at each other, huddling into one floating mass of men. Finally their collected weight is enough to bring them splashing into the sea.

INT. / EXT. BOAT - NIGHT

Captain Vhd Vhd directs the boat towards them to begin picking them out of the water.

Qfwfq looks anxiously up at the Moon.

QFWFQ
Wait wait!!!

Up above Mrs. Vhd Vhd floats slowly a few yards from the Moon.

Qfwfq grabs her harp and scurries up the ladder. He reaches towards her, offering her the harp to grab onto, but she is too far away.

Qfwfq takes one last anxious look down at the Earth, and then jumps off the ladder, swimming furiously towards Mrs. Vhd Vhd.

EXT. OCEAN SKY - NIGHT

Qfwfq crashes into Mrs. Vhd Vhd.

QFWFQ

Hold tight to me. If we cling together
we can go down.

Qfwfq wraps himself around her and tight in her embrace closes his eyes.

MRS. VHD VHD

No...

Qfwfq opens his eyes and he realizes that together they are falling closer not to the Earth but to the Moon. He again shuts his eyes, and whispers:

QFWFQ

I'll be the one to stay with you...

EXT. MOON - NIGHT

All three, Qfwfq, Mrs. Vhd Vhd, and her harp, crash to the Moon and roll away from each other among the scaly rocks.

Qfwfq looks up at the sea above them, the boat becoming a tiny speck as the Moon pulls further away. Faintly he can hear the sailors cry out.

SAILORS

Next month! We'll be back next month!

As the sailor's voices fade, the lilting notes of Mrs. Vhd Vhd's harp can be heard. When Qfwfq turns to look at her, Mrs. Vhd Vhd is nowhere to be seen.

Qfwfq anxiously scans the lunar landscape using the sounds of her harp as a guide. Finally his eye finds her wandering aimlessly among the rocks.

Her silvery arms and thick curly dark hair seem to blend into the Moon's surface.

Qfwfq waves to her but she doesn't notice and wanders on, stroking her harp.

Qfwfq looks up at the Earth, its features now tiny and far away, and a tear rolls down his cheek.

OUTER SPACE

Qfwfq's tear turns into the Moon hurtling through the sky, the Sun's light shifting on its surface as the Earth's shadow shuffles by.

EXT. MOON - NIGHT

Qfwfq sit on a lunar rock and eat Moon milk as the sky made of different Earth landscapes swish by.

Mrs. Vhd Vhd roams the lunar landscape playing her harp as the sky changes to swishing stars.

EXT. MOON - NIGHT

The month past, the Moon's orbit once again passes close to the Earth. Qfwfq can see the Zine Cliffs as the Moon rolls past them and, finally, out over the sea, he sees Captain Vhd Vhd's boat.

Directly above him now, the boat seems much further away than before; it is clear the Moon and the Earth are growing distant.

INT. / EXT. BOAT - NIGHT

The Moon too far above to reach with the ladder, the sailors aim for it with long poles, but these too fall short.

One last pole, far longer than all the rest is raised.

EXT. MOON - NIGHT

Qfwfq watches as the pole strains upward until it actually touches the surface of the Moon several yards way from him. The

pole taps at the Moon playfully, tickling into crevices and sliding across ridges.

Qfwfq looks down the length of the pole.

INT. / EXT. BOAT - NIGHT

He sees that it is the Deaf One who controls it. he is flirting with the Moon one last time, twirling it on the end of the pole, nudging it away.

EXT. MOON - NIGHT

Mrs. Vhd Vhd turns, also recognizing the Deaf One. She watches him as he gazes at the Moon, a smile on his lips and tears in his eyes.

EXT. MOON - NIGHT

Qfwfq runs to the pole, turns to Mrs. Vhd Vhd and waves her over, but she, still watching the Deaf One, does not move.

Frantically, Qfwfq climbs up the pole, straining to break free of the Moon's attraction. When he makes it about halfway he stops climbing and simply slides down headfirst towards the Earth.

Unable to bear the strain, the pole suddenly snaps, sending Qfwfq plummeting into the ocean.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

Bobbing in the water, Qfwfq looks up at the now distant Moon.

He can see Mrs. Vhd Vhd lying on her back, slowly stroking her harp.

INT. / EXT. BOAT - NIGHT

The Deaf One, standing on the boat's deck, the broken end of the pole still in his hands, also gazes up at the Moon.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

The Moon rolls on, and its terrain shifts.

Mrs. Vhd Vhd's features blend seamlessly into the lunar landscape and, her harp still singing, she vanishes.

EXT. THE ZINE CLIFFES - NIGHT

Qfwfq sits on the ridge, staring wistfully up at the full Moon, now small in the sky.

As a harp plays softly, Qfwfq's dog begins to howl, and soon an entire chorus of dogs, all across the land, joins in, howling together at the Moon.

And Qfwfq howls with them.

END.