

Go There

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Adapted by Fishtank Staff

- 1 Stand on Europa's surface and look up,
And Jupiter is too big to grasp.
Sit on the surface—no, lie down.
How overwhelming Jupiter is in the darkness, and so bright.
- 5 On your back like this it feels like looking down, like you could fall into those churning clouds.

It's cold on icy Europa, but beneath Jupiter's clouds is a worldwide furnace.
Jupiter just loiters there, never rising or setting.

But it changes

- 10 So fast!
The clouds are in an endless race from one horizon of the planet to the other.
When you woke, the Great Red spot crept up the western horizon like a planet-sized flounder.

- 15 Now lunchtime and the Great Red spot has already disappeared over the eastern horizon.

Jupiter changes like Earth's moon.
Crescent-full-crescent-dark...
You wake today, and Jupiter is full.
You wake the next day, and Jupiter is a thick crescent and the Sun is rising on your left.

- 20 By bedtime the Sun has disappeared behind Jupiter,
which is now mostly dark with a ring of twilight.

- 25 From here on Europa Jupiter is a campfire of clouds.
Could you watch this forever?
So still, yet not still.
But you can not stay, must not stay.
This is no place for humans.
The radiation.
Two years to get here but already you must leave and never return.
The radiation

30 You must return to Earth where nature sculpted all the species to fit our planet,
Where the sky is mostly empty, and will sometimes seem dull by comparison,
Where the world in the sky is only a medium-sized moon.
But Earth is the safest planet for you
For now.

35 Nature still sculpts us.
And someday it will mold us into something different,
Maybe into creatures harder and more adaptable.
Then we'll make homes of the planets
Here and around other stars.

40 Maybe some of us will make spaceships our homes
So we can always be exploring

And finding new worlds to study
And to admire
And to dream about.