

5-1-1998

# Heaven on earth

Elena Cambio

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# Heaven on Earth

By

Elena Cambio

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Imaging Arts Film/Video/Animation  
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES  
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK  
May, 1998

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Title of Thesis: Heaven on Earth

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Date: May 6, 1998

*Heaven on Earth* is a screenplay that was written over the span of two years. The genesis of this project was created in a script writing workshop with Prof. Erik Timmerman, where I first began to develop the love story of God and Lucifer. Without Erik's guidance, this script would never have been finished, and so I dedicate the final script to him.

## I. The beginning...

In the beginning, there was God. After a time, she created her angels. One magnificent angel, Lucifer, she took as her lover, and their fantastic union produced the human race. Things went along swimmingly, until it became clear that Lucifer and God did not see eye to eye on how to bring up the kids. The argument of the universe resulted in a split between God and Lucifer, and as each strove to prove her/his point, humanity became more and more segregated and confused.

Both wanted the success and evolution of humanity, but they could never agree on how this was best accomplished. God's perspective was that Rules and Regulations were needed to guide the development of humanity, while Lucifer felt that complete freedom was needed to allow his children to evolve. As these two philosophies came head to head, the "good and evil/ light and darkness" dualities were born on earth.

My story, in the beginning, had as its main characters God, a female deity, and Lucifer, her lover. It was about Lucifer's struggle to be taken seriously, and about God's struggle for control. Lucifer was the hero, as flawed as any could be, trying to be the father of humanity. God was equally flawed, in that her ego and need for control prevented her from experiencing the beauty of loving another as herself.

## II. Celeste

Great idea, this concept, except for one problem: there wasn't a story. In the search for a story to express this basic concept, I eventually came up with a new character - a human woman whom I decided to call Celeste, in appreciation for the celestial beginnings of humanity. Celeste began as a catalyst for God and Lucifer to resolve their differences, thus enabling the humans to heal the schism that has plagued us for so long. I wrote Celeste originally as a young woman who lived on the edge, completely drowning in the excesses of the flesh (drugs, sex, the intoxication of thrill, etc.). She died after being hit by a car, and found herself face to face with the Almighty, who made her an offer she couldn't refuse: God agreed to ultimately admit Celeste into heaven IF God could co-habitant with her in Celeste's body for an undisclosed amount of time. The plan: to seduce Lucifer all over again and put an end to the stupid argument.

This was certainly an improvement in the development of my script, and I did enjoy writing Celeste's bizarre story. Yet, as I wrote more and more of Celeste, I became more concerned with her experiences than with Lucifer's. In terms of character function, Lucifer was becoming more of an equal with God. The drafts around this period of development weren't solid because I was vacillating between Celeste and Lucifer as my main character.

At this point, I became very distracted from writing the script. I felt I had written myself into a corner and I couldn't find a way out, and as a result I stopped writing for a good two months. I knew I had to get a move on the first "official" draft for my committee to review, yet I had absolutely no idea where to go.

Prof. Timmerman finally pointed out to me that all I needed was to decide, once and for all, who the main character was going to be - whose story it was going to be. The answer seemed plain - this was Celeste's struggle, on

behalf of all humanity. She became the focus of the story, which required me to shift the script's representation of good and evil.

### III. Good and Evil

Celeste's quest became one for balance. I began to explore the basic, Puritanical definitions of good and evil upon which this country was founded, and it all seemed to boil down to the spirit vs. the flesh. Spirit and flesh, we are taught in Western culture, are at odds with each other. They cannot coexist peaceably, and we must constantly overcome the temptation of the body to enjoy the benefits of the soul.

To further define this quandary, I researched arguments on the nature of Jesus Christ. The Gnostic Christians of the first few centuries believed he was an advanced divine spirit who had reincarnated into the final form of Christ, while the Orthodox Christians insisted he was simply God in the guise of a man.<sup>1</sup> Along the way, synods and Church Councils were held to determine the true nature of Christ, resulting in the ultimate decision that he was in fact both God and Man. Still, for centuries, the belief that Jesus' divine nature overruled his humanity was espoused by the Church. In the Christian scriptural writings that are accepted today as the sacred texts of the Bible, Jesus was faced with a number of temptations offered up by Satan, and in all cases he was able to overcome them through his Divine nature. Obviously, pleasures of the flesh were/are considered as the influence of Satan, and were something to overcome and be strong against. In other words, human nature was inherently flawed.

Philosophers in later centuries applied their wits to determining the true state of humanity's nature, but this meant nothing to the Church, which

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<sup>1</sup> Ted Andrews, *The Occult Christ: Angelic Mysteries and the Divine Feminine*, (Llewellyn Publications, 1993), 38-9

had already adopted Augustine's principle of original sin<sup>2</sup>. Augustine assumed that original sin is transmitted in the fluids of procreation. Sexual intercourse should therefore be indulged in as little as possible, even within the bonds of marriage, as it involves a loss of rational control and is therefore always at least venially sinful. Since every human was born with original sin, every human was evil by nature and therefore required the cleansing of Baptism.

In my own view of humanity, our challenge is to learn how to balance our duality, to let our physical and spiritual selves complement each other as they were meant to do. Neither is more or less valid than the other, and either in excess can destroy us. It occurred to me that we often hear about the excesses of carnal pleasure, be it sex, substance abuse, over-eating, laziness, etc., but we don't often hear about excesses to the other extreme. Only the occasional cult-driven mass-suicide grabs our attention, and we write them off as wackos. I believe that those "wackos" are simple people trying to find wholeness - but they are only looking at half of their humanity.

This, I realized, was the battle that Celeste had to fight. This battle would be fought internally, between her own desires and urges, and her spirit and need for rational thought. This struggle would be represented externally through the ultimate archetypes of spirit and flesh: God and Lucifer.

I decided to turn the immortals' relationship into a more comical ex-husband/ex-wife paradigm. Through their conversations and arguments, the principles are revealed, and through Celeste's journey, these principles are embodied in their competition within her own being.

Celeste's ultimate goal thus became the balance of spirit and flesh. Along the way, she would have to descend, in the manner of all mythical

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<sup>2</sup>Thomas Cahill, *How The Irish Saved Civilization*, (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 1995), 65-66

heroes, into Hell (or death), which in this case is very literal. During her visit to Hell, Lucifer helps her to discover the other side to her being, and to accept it as natural and in harmony with her spirit.

#### IV. The journey.

Celeste's journey begins as a baby, when her mother gives her up to the convent. Celeste is a child born out of wedlock; born, as she would say, of original sin. She grows up in the convent, unaware of her heritage, under the tender care of Sr. Frances, who treats Celeste as her own daughter. The teenaged Celeste develops the idea that her body is problematic in achieving her goal of spiritual perfection. Her question becomes an obsession when Sr. Frances, on her deathbed, reveals the truth about Celeste's parentage.

Celeste, in the meantime, has met Ralph, to whom she is attracted and who is very interested in her. She denies the budding romance, in fact she tries to stifle it by insisting that their time together be spent reading from the Bible. As the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration are God's minions, Ralph is, for a time, Lucifer's.

I had to decide whether Ralph's intentions would be upstanding or lascivious. I realized that he had to be an honest man capable of real love in order for Celeste's attraction to him to be a positive catalyst in accepting her physical nature. However, Lucifer is not so upstanding, and so he manipulates (possesses?) Ralph long enough to urge (force?) him to kiss Celeste.

This scene may be viewed either as Lucifer's direct influence, a possession and removal of free will, or simply as Ralph's wash of uncontrollable desire, which is usually attributed to the Prince of Darkness. Either way, this kiss propels Celeste into the next phase of her development. Ralph himself feels guilty afterwards, as any upstanding young man might



after kissing a nun-in-training. Celeste in turn becomes desperate enough to allow Lucifer to seduce her into hell with the promise that she can meet her mother and resolve her conflict once and for all.

## V. A Family Affair

Searching for one's roots and researching a family history is ultimately about defining one's self. As I worked out the relationships between Celeste and the other characters, Prof. Carageorge pointed out that this script was about family as much as anything else.

Ultimately, Celeste needs to confront her parentage, her mother, in order to begin healing the schism within her. Leading up to this, she is nurtured by an extended family at the convent, led by Sr. Frances. Sr. Frances is Celeste's spiritual mother, as Carrie is her biological mother, and Sr. Frances does recognize the need for Celeste to accept a painful part of her own history. Of course, Celeste needs some convincing, which is where Lucifer comes in.

Lucifer is many things to Celeste. As he and God produced humanity, he is Celeste's father. As God also created Lucifer, he is Celeste's brother. In his capacity as the incarnation of lust, he is desirous of her, and so is her lover. Certainly there is the undercurrent of incest in his relations to her, which makes him all the more distasteful to her. Yet, it is where these three roles intersect which ultimately brings her to understand how he exists within her, in what we know as archetypes of parent, sibling, lover. By accepting these parts of herself, her physical being, and her need for love, she overcomes the incestuous overtones of these combined archetypes and can accept physical love as part of her humanity.

## VI. Heaven on Earth

In Act III, Celeste is transformed as she witnesses a vision of the birth, destruction and rebirth of the universe. The earth's cycle of life and death is revealed as an outgrowth of the constant interplay of physical and psychic energies. She is welcomed back into this cycle as she accepts her dual nature and finds the need for balance. The final ellipse of the earth with the single daisy is Celeste returning to earth, bringing with her the understanding that she has earned in Hell. She meets Ralph upon her return to earth, hands him a daisy, and walks away.

Ralph is most definitely a part of her earthly experience, but I felt it necessary to leave her the option of choosing him or not choosing him. Although this is a story about family, I needed Celeste to maintain her freedom so newly gained. Marrying Ralph would not be a fitting way for her to begin this new life, so I chose to leave the hint of their association, the thrill of new beginnings for Celeste. In this story, at least, she is free to create her own heaven on earth.

## VII. Do or Die

There were at least two periods in the production of this thesis in which I felt blocked. One was creative, as outlined earlier, the other was on an organizational level. Certainly, Prof. Timmerman's retirement presented me with the challenge of reconstituting my committee, which ultimately was a very solid group of faculty. Still, I had become used to the conversations that he and I would have, the kind where my ideas were being pulled from me without me even knowing it. I had to reorganize my thoughts and my modus operandi, which I feel I handled marginally well.

In February, I held the required informal reading of the script at my home. The hope was to get a feel for how genuine the dialogue was, and to

some extent this was communicated to me by my readers. For the most part, however, they were more interested in presenting me with detail-oriented problems, such as the fact that daisies don't grow in spring, and that the nurse would never be able to prepare a needle of sedatives without a doctor's prescription. I did receive some feedback on the dialogue itself, but not as much as I'd hoped for.

Still, the whole experience was crucial for me. I found it strange to hear these words spoken out loud, and I found that I really wanted to direct the readers, but we had little time for that. I had to keep reminding myself that the public reading is where I will direct the readers.

As if the thesis work wasn't enough, last summer I began another project - a documentary to be filmed in Ireland. By the time the script was finished in March, I was ready to leave for Ireland, and upon my return I had to get my act together and organize the public reading of the script. This presented no real problem, only a concerted devotion of time and energy. The thesis paper was also a matter of devoting time and energy, and quite honestly I'm amazed that I have any left after filming two weeks in Ireland. I did find it a bit stressful to switch gears back and forth between the two, but I don't regret a moment spent on either project.

## VIII. Moment of Truth

The time finally came for the public reading - the moment where the script actually becomes a recognized work in the department. Of course, I obsessed over the details. The reception consisted of finger foods (grapes, cheese, hummus, baba ganouj, light crackers and juice) and I spent at least fifteen minutes in Wegmans picking out the plates, napkins and table cover. I also made a mix tape which I played while folks were coming in and milling around. I called it "The Divine Mix" and it included thematically suitable

music from Tori Amos to Peter Gabriel to Dead Can Dance. I considered this to be a thoughtful touch, and even provided a song list near the boom box, but I have no idea if anyone paid attention to it.

The reading itself was mildly well attended, with an equal number of audience members and readers. It would have been helpful for me to have more of a guideline as to how a reading should be organized. In retrospect, I would do a few things differently.

There were too many readers, first of all, and I would certainly cut down number of readers by at least two or three. In addition, I would have someone else read the narration. Doing it myself prevented me from taking notes during the reading, and was more stress than I probably needed.

Anne Orwin, adjunct professor in the department, was my respondent, and gave me some wonderful feedback in terms of theme and construction. One of her most salient points was the inversion of the male/female duality in my story. Typically in Western mythology, the female represents darkness, the underworld and intuition, and the male belongs to the world of light, heaven and the intellect. These archetypes are flipped in the characters of Lucifer and God.

What followed was a juicy discussion of this observation and other issues and themes in the script. It caused people to think and question, which is why I consider the reading to be a successful experience.

## IX. Double Take

As this entire process has progressed, I have found myself identifying quite strongly with Celeste. Although my personal situation is nothing like hers, it isn't surprising that some of her questions are or have been my own. I have struggled to achieve balance in my life, not just between physical and spiritual dualities, but also between care and attention paid to myself and to

the rest of the world. Personal growth is not an easy thing to commit to, but both Celeste and I seem to have made that choice.

Although I've never met the persons of God or Lucifer, I feel there are forces in the Universe which help me on a day-to-day basis. My own intuition is something I've learned to trust, which is something Celeste will develop as she achieves her balance and moves on. Like me, Celeste chooses at the end of the story not to limit herself to any one relationship because she still has many things to do by and for herself. Still, she is still open to the possibilities of connecting to other human beings.

Just as Celeste wants to help others through her work at the mission, I know that part of my own mission here is to eventually teach young people. Celeste and I share the desire to reach out to others, to be active in making a difference.

Celeste and I are both at similar points, by the end of the story, in terms of our progress. Personal growth has been a priority, and it still is, but it now comes into the context of going out into the world. Being sheltered in an institution or a convent is one thing, but holding onto integrity and intuition in the face of a depersonalized, fractured society will be a huge challenge for both of us.

Graduate Thesis Proposal Contract

Proposal Thy Kingdom Come  
Student Elena Cambio

Committee Chair Erik Timmerman  
Committee Mem. Adrienne Carageorge  
Committee Mem. Cat Ashworth

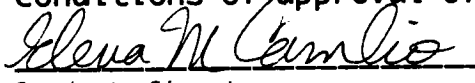
Treatment  Budget  Timeline  Supporting  
Materials  Marketing

Discussion Notes:

Not Approved  Date for resubmission \_\_\_\_\_  
Approved  Project to be completed by NOV 15, 1997  
Conditions of Approval:

For the faculty  Date 5/2/97  
Committee Chair or Dept. Chair Signature

I accept that the above is an accurate record of the conditions of approval of my MFA thesis project.

 Date 5/2/97  
Student Signature

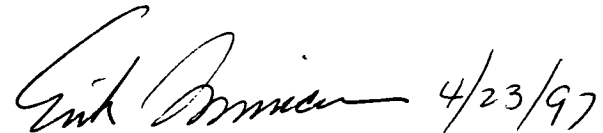
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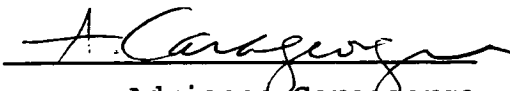
Elena Cambio

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

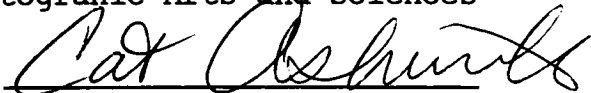
MFA Imaging Arts / Live Action Film Production  
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Rochester, New York  
May, 1997

 4/23/97

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Cat Ashworth  
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TimelineMay (Spring 963)

- Complete Thesis Prep Course (2)
- Meet with committee chair and members each once a week
- Finish detailed outline of story and character descriptions

June-August (Summer 964)

6 credits

- Write first draft and first revision of script
- Meet with committee members as time permits

September-November (Fall 971)

6 credits

- Meet with committee chair every week
- Write final revision of script
- Write thesis report
- November: duplicate report and thesis for submission

NOTE: will attend 12 credits for thesis in Fall Quarter 971, with committee chair's permission, as well as one required 3 credit H&A course.



BUDGET

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>ESTIMATE</u>	<u>IN KIND</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>
1. Copies for proposal (13) @ 10 pp stapled Kinko's Copies	\$ 10.24		\$ 10.24
2. Copies of report (2) @ 5 pp 1 copy stapled	\$ 5.15		\$ 5.15
3. (11) Thesis copies (1) for submission (10) for festivals 120 pp 70 lb cover 2 hole drill Kinko's Copies	\$124.64		\$124.64
Silver fasteners (box of 50) Office Max	\$ 2.69		\$ 2.69
4. Postage for festivals (10) at \$2.95 ea	\$ 29.50		\$ 29.50
5. Festival Fees (total)	\$130.00		\$130.00
6. Computer Disks (box of 10)	\$ 5.00	\$ 5.00	
7. Refreshments author's reading public reading	\$ 20.00 \$ 50.00		\$ 20.00 \$ 50.00
8. Scriptwriter non-union	\$ 10K	\$ 10K	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$10,377.22</b>	<b>\$10,005.00</b>	<b>\$ 377.22</b>

Marketing Plan

1. Cyclone Productions  
Annual Screenwriter's  
Project  
  
Cyclone Productions  
Attn: Screenwriter's  
Project  
3412 Milwaukee, Suite 485  
Northbrook, IL 60062  
  
August 1st, 1998
2. Nicholl Fellowships in  
Screenwriting  
  
Academy Foundation  
Nicholl Fellowships in  
Screenwriting  
8949 Wilshire Blvd.  
Beverly Hills, CA  
90211-1972  
  
May 1, 1998, \$30
3. Smoky Mountain/Nantahala  
Media Festival  
  
SPVVA, Inc.  
Smoky Mountain Art Center  
P.O. Box 1068  
Byrson City,  
North Carolina 28713  
  
March 28, 1998, \$10
4. Walt Disney  
  
Contact: Brenda  
Vangsness,  
Program Administrator  
Walt Disney Studio  
500 S. Buena Vista St.  
Burbank, CA 91521-0880
5. America's Best  
  
The Writer's Foundation  
1801 Burnett Ave  
Syracuse, NY 13206  
  
Deadline: January, 1998
6. The Writers' Network  
  
8306 Wilshire Blvd.  
Suite 482  
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
7. Writer's Workshop  
  
P.O. Box 69799  
Los Angeles, CA 90069
8. Claddah Films Annual  
Script Awards  
  
Claddah Films, Ltd.  
4/5 High St.  
Galway, Ireland  
  
June 1998
9. Wavy Line Productions  
  
HBO New Writers Project  
2049 Century Pk. E. 42 Fl  
Los Angeles, CA 90067
10. WorldFest Charleston  
  
J. Hunter Todd, Director  
P.O. Box 338  
Charleston, SC 29401-0838

*Thy Kingdom Come - Treatment*

The credits roll over a pair of woman's hands picking wild flowers and braiding them into a course length of rope. After a time, the hands cease picking flowers and instead, they pick thorny bits of vine and sharp twigs out of the earth. These, too, are woven into the rope. As the credits finish, the woman lifts her coarsely woven shift to tie the thorny rope around her waist.

The woman is CELESTE, a 20-year-old novitiate in the order of the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. Celeste has devoted her life to God by denying the physical, always struggling to immerse herself in absolute purity of spirit. She takes great care to make herself look as simple as possible, but even so her strength and earthly beauty escape her modest demeanor. Her life is simple, as are her beliefs. The Sisters' convent is situated on a farm. It is an idyllic place to escape the evil trappings of the world.

One morning, while milking the cows in the barn, Celeste sees Ralph, a young man from the village who does heavy work in the Sisters' barn. Her eyes roam over him in secret, and they betray her lustful thoughts. She runs out in a cold sweat to find a hidden place behind the barn. Sobbing, she lifts her shift and yanks the rope tighter around her waist. Her tears cease as the sting of the rope braces her against her sin. She races into the convent and throws herself onto the floor of the chapel, begging forgiveness and the strength to repel such evil thoughts.

Celeste's prayers are being heard, but not by the Almighty. She is being observed by LUCIFER, the second most powerful being in the universe, who is looking for a queen with whom to rule the Underworld. AQUILLUS, his aide, believes he has found a suitable queen in Celeste.

Later that evening, Lucifer pays her a visit in her tiny cell. At first she does not believe he is the Prince of Darkness, then she is horrified when she does believe. but finds herself attracted to this age-old Prince of Evil for what she believes is her destiny - to save the very Devil himself. She agrees to return to the Underworld with him on the condition that she can return to her present life at any time she wishes, and that her soul will remain unblemished.

Celeste goes to Hell with the self-righteous notion that she is the teacher, and Lucifer her student. Once there, Celeste finds there are plenty of things for her to learn. For one thing, there are no eternal flames and cinder, no souls in tortuous pits of fire and brimstone. The place is rather like a gothic garden, but flat, and without much substance. If she looks at anything too long, it ceases to exist. The residents of hell are simply bored out of their minds, sitting around playing mah jong, tennis, reading ancient texts - anything to avoid the pervasive ennui. The mood of the entire place is reminiscent of a big waiting room; souls are waiting to be reincarnated on Earth.

Lucifer treats her with respect and adoration, crowning her with beautiful flowers and bedecking her with jewels. She sits in a throne next to his, and learns first hand the realities of the Afterlife. She observes the purely bureaucratic functions of the afterlife shuffle. Souls are processed and examined, categorized, and shipped off to various parts of Hell. Some are even sent on to Heaven, having become lost upon the death of the body.

Celeste finds herself in awe of Lucifer as he deals with each and every case with patience and fatherliness. The days go by, and Celeste finds herself more and more wanting to enjoy herself in Lucifer's palace of pleasure. She finds herself more and more attracted to Lucifer, but each night, she goes into her own room and ties the rope around her waist a little tighter.

Lucifer, on his part, is absolutely entranced by the young Celeste, but his heart is broken each time she hardens her heart against him and mutilates herself in the effort to keep her lust at bay.

One morning, after another close call with Lucifer and her own desire, Celeste realizes that she no longer believes she can deliver Lucifer to God as she'd planned. Yet, she has become so enamored of him that she cannot return to the convent. Her own ego and lust have damned her, and so she makes a prisoner of herself.

A few days into her self-imprisonment, Celeste is visited by Aquillus. Aquillus chastises her for being so dowdy, for repelling Lucifer's love. Celeste demands to know why she was chosen, and Aquillus reveals to her the love story of the universe.

In a barrage of vision (a montage narrated by Aquillus), Celeste learns that God, a female deity, created her angels and had taken Lucifer as her lover. The two were incredibly happy together, until God created humanity. Ever after, the two lovers would argue about the up-start humans. She believed that heavy restrictions, codified law and strict custom were needed for humanity to evolve out of their physical state. Lucifer argued that humans should be allowed every freedom, no matter how decadent, how perverse, how ridiculous, with the belief that humanity has what it takes to eventually find their own way, make their own rules, and find bliss in their physical nature.

Eventually, they parted ways, and Lucifer set out to create his own paradigm on Earth. He and some other renegade angels from Heaven formed the Underworld and were thereafter always upsetting God's plan on Earth. Now, eons later, God has become bored with the whole thing and has left the scene, off to explore other dimensions. Lucifer was crushed, depressed, and without a glimmer or spark of life. Until Celeste. Lucifer needed someone spiritual, someone God-like, to make him whole.

In tears, Celeste realizes the futility of the life she has led. The God she believed in and worshipped doesn't exist. She trashes her room in her anger and frustration.

She cries for her own loss, and for Lucifer's loss. Finally, she goes to confront Lucifer.

Celeste tells Lucifer that she has to leave. He tries to talk her out of it, of course, but she protests that she can't stay and be his "God", for she is human, which means she is both flesh and spirit. Her answer resounds within her, for she has realized the duality in her own being. She lifts her shift and removes the rope, laying it in Lucifer's hands.

Celeste leaves Lucifer and goes to the garden to do what she knows best - she prays.

She prays to God, for the first time knowing how much God is within her as a whole person. She begs God to come back, to restore balance. She speaks to God as a woman, as an equal. The prayer is not quiet and meek, it is commanding and powerful. Celeste glows in the dusky drabness of the garden as she reaches out into the Universe to find God.

Her prayer is answered. Hours later, she is exhausted and sleeping on a stone bench in the garden. God awakens her with a touch. It takes Celeste a moment to recognize her, but when she does, she sinks to her knees in awe. God draws her near, and before long the two are walking arm in arm through the garden. God thanks Celeste for drawing Lucifer out of his depression, and for making them both see how much they do need each other. God blesses Celeste and offers her a choice - to remain with her and Lucifer, or to return to Earth.

Months later, Celeste is in her garden, pulling weeds from around the blossoming flowers. Ralph walks out of her little house and with a glass of water. He brings it over to her, a smile lighting his face. They play in the grass for a few moments before a slight shadow falls over them. Celeste looks up to see a solar eclipse. She smiles, realizes she is late for an appointment, and rushes into her little house with Ralph.

Awhile later we see Celeste, dressed in a summery skirt and blouse, sitting on a bench swing. A table of iced tea and scones sits nearby. As she waits, God appears out of thin air, walking towards the young woman. God warmly greets Celeste with a hug. They sit down with the iced tea and scones to discuss the business at hand: creating heaven on Earth.

*god  
too goody,  
goody at  
end.*

*title.*

## Heaven on Earth

### 22 Basic Food Groups

Psychological problem: Celeste physically tortures herself in denial of the physical body - feels guilt for being born of "sin". (She has rejected her biological mother's existence, since she was born of sin, and has latched onto her spiritual mother's approval.)

Moral problem: Lucifer and God cannot agree on how to handle Celeste's unique problem - this drives their duality even further apart.

Need: Celeste needs to accept and rejoice in her physicality and let it help her evolve as a person.

Inciting Incident: Sr. Frances dies, nearly pushing Celeste over the edge of sanity. She becomes a zealot in response to the death of her spiritual mother.

Subplot: Ralph has a thing for Celeste, feels guilty 'cause she's in training to be a nun.

Ghost: Celeste knows she was an illegitimate baby, mother was a "sinner."

Ally/Allies: Sr. Frances, who dies. Mother Superior. Ralph.

Opponent/Mystery: Lucifer plays opponent - he is embodiment of physical nature. He tries to seduce her - not for his own benefit (although he certainly does enjoy it) but for her own education.

False Ally: God. The ideals to which Celeste has dedicated herself have been hurting her all along.

Desire Line: Celeste wants to live an elevated, spiritual/holy existence of self-denial. In the end, she wants to live with Ralph.

First Revelation: Celeste and Ralph kiss. She consciously realizes her attraction to him.

Plan and opponent's plan: Celeste wants to "save" Lucifer's soul. Lucifer wants to "corrupt" hers.

Attack of the allies: Ralph argues about God's nature and Mother Superior reigns in Celeste's zealous activities.

Training: Celeste in hell, trying to save Lucifer's soul, learning about herself instead.

Skirmish/Defeat: Lucifer and Celeste get into a clinch. She almost gives in - he gets pissed and tells her that he and God are lovers, etc. She is horrified and goes into seclusion.

Gate/Revelation: In seclusion, Celeste is ready to take her own life, but then has a vision of Sr. Frances, with a legion of angels and demons. She cryptically gives Celeste the key to her own duality, Celeste doesn't quite understand, yet.

Battle/Moral decision: God and Lucifer argue over Celeste's fate. Each tries to convince Celeste that she belongs with one or the other. After hearing them each out (they use mental imagery and sensory experience to convince/tempt her) she chooses to accept both of them into her being, accusing them of simply being human-made constructs.

Lucifer and God turn to each other and vanish. Celeste is in a misty limbo and has an experience of visionary proportions, where she sees the earth being formed and destroyed, formed and destroyed over and over. The last part of the vision is a single flower, a daisy, blowing gently in a breeze.

Equilibrium: Celeste finds herself back on convent farm. She finds Ralph and gives him a daisy. He follows her as she leaves the convent grounds.

## Act I

- Celeste is brought to the convent as an infant, by her young mother. Mother Superior argues that the sisterhood is not a babysitting service. Celeste's mother sways the nun's opinion by saying that Celeste was born out of a sin she committed, and that she wants Celeste to be raised in a house of God. Another nun, Sr. Frances, agrees to become responsible for the baby girl.

- God & Lucifer going over birthcharts for Pisces - they're deciding who should "teach" each individual. They argue about their teaching styles - this is an age-old competition that is played out in the lives of humans. According to God, humans need lots of rules and regulations to guide them on a spiritual path that will lead to their eventual evolution. Lucifer says humans need to be let loose, to explore their physicality and find their freedom for them to evolve. God and Lucifer trade barbs and insults, but also trade inside jokes and throw back-handed compliments to each other. They have an attraction/repulsion relationship that goes back and forth.

When they get to Celeste's name - they cannot agree on who should "teach" her. Lucifer feels that since she was born of sin, she should be his. God thinks that since her mother has turned her over to a convent, God should be her teacher. God convinces Lucifer to let her try it "her way." Lucifer gives in, with a "you'll see...I'll just have to say I told you so in about 18 years."

- 16 years later: Celeste is reading from an old Bible manuscript. Sr. Frances hovers over her, lovingly, as a real mother would. She instructs Celeste in the meaning of the scripture (if you sin by your hand, cut it off. if you sin by your eye, pluck it out, etc). Celeste questions why we even have bodies if they are the cause of so much sin. "Why can't we exist as the spiritual beings we are?" she asks. Sr. Frances explains that God created us in his image, to challenge us to rise above the physical body and be rejoined with him in spirit. Celeste finds fault in this plan and struggles with the idea that her body was a gift from God. Sr. Frances is annoyed/perplexed that Celeste is questioning these things. She tells Celeste to meditate further upon the scripture and leaves to attend other duties with a kiss upon Celeste's forehead.

- Celeste is outside, writing in a journal, we hear her voice over. She writes about her desire to sear the flesh from her body to be the spiritual being that she truly is, and that she cannot possibly be perfect until she is dead and in spirit form only. We see a holy gleam in Celeste's eye as she daydreams about this, and we also see Ralph, one of the farmhands, shyly approaching her. She begins to instruct him in



the scriptures, excited to have a pupil. He gazes at her as she reads from scripture, and she is confused at the attraction that is there. Bells ring for dinner and she leaves in a rush, promising to teach him more if he would like. He says, yes, he would like.

-After dinner, Celeste and Sr. Frances go for a walk in the garden. Celeste tells Sr. Frances about instructing Ralph in the scriptures. Sr. Frances tries to tell Celeste that Ralph may not be so interested in the scripture, but Celeste blushes and will hear nothing of it. Sr. Frances tries to let Celeste know that it's okay to be interested in the boy, that she doesn't have to be a nun just because she was raised in the convent. Celeste affirms her intention to take vows, to which Sr. Frances responds with hesitation. Sr. Frances excuses herself, citing a headache, leaving Celeste in the garden alone. She writes in her ever-present journal - that she will never make the same mistakes her biological mother did, will only walk the path of righteousness, etc.

- Lucifer and God are discussing Celeste over cappuccino and biscotti. Lucifer demands to take over Celeste's "education" because all this God-stuff is really screwing her up in the head. God is flattered by Celeste's devotion, and insists that things are going as planned.

- Ralph is hanging out with a couple other local farm-hands that work on near-by farms. They are teasing him about his crush on Celeste, and he admits feeling weird about his attraction to a future nun. One of his buddies tells him to get over Celeste, that she's not going to "put out" anyway, so what's the use? Ralph gets pissed and storms out.

- Celeste is in the convent's barn, milking cows, a job which she despises. She is trying to convince herself that milking cows is good for her by talking out loud to herself. In walks Ralph, who looks at Celeste with a tender eye. She is polite but aloof as Ralph tries to get her to talk to him, even about scripture. Another novice breaks up their interlude with news that Sr. Frances has suffered a stroke. They hurry back to the convent building.

- Sr. Frances is in her bed, the doctor is there and pronounces that he can do nothing. She is mostly paralyzed and can barely speak. Night falls and Celeste is still at her bedside. Sr. Frances whispers to Celeste before she dies - tells her to be a good girl and to remember to give herself to God's ineffable plan. Celeste sees the spirit of Sr. Frances as it rises out of the body and is swept up towards heaven - Celeste is in shock, babbling and carrying on. The other nuns lead Celeste to her room and put her to bed for the night.

- Sr. Frances' funeral. Celeste does not weep. She only stares and fidgets. The Mother Superior keeps an eye on her throughout. God and Lucifer are in the cemetery, looking down on the funeral and watching Celeste. Lucifer asks if this is part of the plan, and does God realize that Celeste is pretty weak right and may well go insane. God says, yes and asks Lucifer to give her more time - that she's sure she can bring her around. Lucifer agrees - with his fingers crossed behind his back.

ACT II

- Celeste singing in chapel choir. Her voice is sweet and pure. Ralph is in chapel, too, obviously there to see and hear Celeste. After the service, they go out for a walk, where Celeste is teaching him scripture. They get into a discussion about what God is/isn't. Celeste is upset when Ralph clings to the view that God is Nature, that there is no "ineffable plan." He smoothes things over and lets her preach to him some more so that he can gaze at her and at least hear the sound of her voice.

- Mother Superior meets with some of the older sisters. They decide to send Celeste to their new Mission in town, to help her recover from the death Sr. Frances and keep her from being bored. (their conversation becomes voice-over for the next scene)

- Celeste is picking flowers, braiding them into a length of rope. She begins braiding in thorns, prickly stems, sharp twigs, etc. She goes into the barn and ties the rope around her waist, under her shift, yanking it tight so that the tears fall silently from her eyes.

- Lucifer is appalled at Celeste's self-mortification, has had it with God's appraisal of the situation with Celeste. Aquillus helps him come up with a plan to woo Celeste away from her "godliness." The plan is not made completely clear, but it's clear that Lucifer is being devious.

- Celeste is getting in a pick-up truck with two other sisters. Ralph and other farm-hands are loading boxes of food and supplies into back of truck. He wishes her good luck on her first day. She doesn't take his offered hand to help her into the truck, but she subtly pulls on the painful rope under her clothes, instead.

- On the way into town, the sisters discuss the Mission. Celeste talks avidly of saving souls while the other two nuns are more interested in feeding, clothing and giving medical attention to the poor and destitute. Tension develops between Celeste and the two sisters on this point.

- Later in the day, the Mission is quite busy. The doctor who saw to Sr. Frances is attending to children's vaccinations and exams with young mothers. Celeste makes it her business to stay away from these young mothers and their children, and instead mingles with the older poor folk, preaching the word of God. Meanwhile, the other nuns are sweating and working hard in the kitchen for the evening's dinner and registering the mothers and children for the exams etc. The other sisters aren't pleased with Celeste.

- Mother Superior lectures Celeste on her duties at the Mission - Celeste protests that she must preach the word of God and save souls. Mother Superior tries to convince her that they need to save their bodies, in the process demonstrating God's love. Celeste is sent away to meditate on the meaning of service to God.

- Celeste is in the chapel, alone, praying out loud for God to help her be more God-like. She looks at the statue of Mary as she tugs at her rope and sees the statue bleeding the Stigmata. She looks down to see her own blood seeping through her shift. In her delusion, she believes she is being spoken to and cries out. Another sister finds Celeste passed out on the floor of the chapel.

- In Celeste's bed chamber, the doctor cleans the infected wounds around Celeste's waist. He tells Mother Superior that the girl needs rest and some psychological evaluation. They leave Celeste sleeping, planning to bring her to a psychiatric hospital the next day.

- That night, Celeste is visited by Lucifer in her dreams. He surrounds her with sensual imagery of her and Ralph, all the time whispering all manner of erotic things in her ear. She wakes up in a sweat, disoriented. She gets up and walks out into the garden, to get some air. She falls asleep on one of the stone benches.

- Dawn arrives, and Ralph has just arrived to work at the convent barn. He detours through the garden, smelling the blossoms and enjoying the morning, when he comes upon Celeste sleeping on the bench. As he stands there, watching her, Lucifer's spectre appears beside him, whispering in his ear how lovely she is, how he wants her. Ralph kneels down to touch her face. He does, and she awakens. Lucifer possesses Ralph for the few moments it takes to mesmerize her in her dreamy state and he kisses her. She kisses him back, still in a dream, but at some point realizes what's happening and breaks away. She sees the change in Ralph's eyes and knows he is not himself. Frightened, she scrambles away from Ralph. Lucifer leaves Ralph's body, leaving a confused, sexually excited young man looking helplessly as Celeste backs away fervently praying the Hail Mary.

- Celeste literally runs into the doctor, who has come to bring her to the psychiatrists. She is like a hunted deer, and runs in her nightgown and bare feet into the barn, locking it from within. The doctor and the Mother Superior are calling for her to come out.

- Lucifer appears to her. He wrangles with her - wants her to be his Queen in Hell. Offers her the chance to save his soul. Reminds her that if she stays here she'll be locked up in the looney bin. He is offering her salvation. She accepts.

- God is furious, tries to see Lucifer but she is not allowed past the drab gates of Hell. She posts two of her arch-angels to stand guard outside the gates of Hell with orders to bring Celeste to her immediately if she steps outside. Lucifer appears and sends the angels away. He and God argue about Celeste's fate. In the end he leaves God fuming in the dust.

\*\*This is most of the detailed outline - I'm still finishing it, but the rest of the story goes something like this:

- While in Hell, Celeste finds out Lucifer isn't such a bad guy, that he just can't help himself. They continue to be attracted to each other, Celeste continues to hold back, Lucifer continues to play the game with her.

- Lucifer and Celeste in a clinch, she almost gives in to her passions but stops herself. Lucifer finally gets pissed and tells her about himself and God, cruelly breaking apart her notions of the order of the Universe.

- Celeste goes into seclusion, is ready to take her own life. In her delirium, has a vision of Sr. Frances, who gives Celeste a cryptic key to her own duality.

- Celeste calls a meeting with God and Lucifer. They argue over Celeste - each tries to convince her to choose one or the other. They each use mental and physical stimulation. She teases them with her decision, then declares she's accepting both of them, and accuses them of being petty creations of humans. She gives 'em hell, no pun intended. When she's done, they turn to each other, smile, and vanish.

- Celeste is in a misty limbo and experiences mind-bending visions of the earth being destroyed and created, over and over again. The last part of the vision is a single flower, a daisy, blowing gently in a breeze.

- Celeste finds herself in a field of daisies overlooking the convent and the farm. She lifts her face to the sun, smiles, and runs to the farmyard, enjoying the sensations of movement and air for the first time in her life. She finds Ralph, and hands him a daisy. She leaves the convent grounds, hits the

dirt road. Ralph smiles over the daisy and follows her. She twirls and laughs as she walks barefoot down the dirt road.