



The Starry Messenger

Written by

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'non est ad astra mollis e terris via'

(Lucius Annaeus Seneca)

'There is no easy path from the Earth to the Stars'

INT. OBSERVATORY DOME - DAY

CLOSE UP - IPHAS image of the Rosette Nebula. Pull out and rotate slowly to give the impression of floating in space.

SOUNDTRACK - new-agey, cliché TV science documentary -type music

ADAM "LOONY" MCLOONEY (V.O.)
(conveying a sense of wonder)
There are more things in Heaven and
Earth than are dreamt of in your
philosophy...

Suddenly, detergent squibbed onto the image dribbles down the nebula... The camera pulls back and we see CELESTE HEAVENS, in a cleaner's apron, wiping down a monitor with a dirty rag (evidently listening to the spacey music on her iPod).

ADAM "LOONY" MCLOONEY, a young astronomy postdoc, is showing a group of school pupils around the observatory dome.

LOONY
Hiya!

CELESTE
(coyly)
Don't mind me!

Celeste slinks into the background, watching the tour with interest.

LOONY
(continuing the tour)
...wrote Shakespeare in *Hamlet*, in
1600. Ten years later, Galileo
Galilei published this book,
Sidereus Nuncius -

Loony McLooney picks up a modern copy of *Sidereus Nuncius*.

LOONY
(continuing)
The Starry Messenger.

LOONY

(continuing)

His telescope opened up a whole new world. Key evidence that the Heavens and the Earth are really just made out of the same stuff, obey the same laws.

Loony clicks open a window on the monitor, showing a high-magnification image of lunar craters. Celeste picks up *Sidereus Nuncius* and leafs through the pages.

LOONY

The Moon has mountains, just like the Earth.

Celeste looks at Galileo's corresponding sketches of the moon in *Sidereus Nuncius*.

The pupils look unimpressed. Loony clicks open an image of the asteroid Pallas (by mistake). Celeste's catty, caustic supervisor, MARIA PALLAS, storms up outside, scowling. Loony then opens an image of Jupiter.

PALLAS

Celeste!

LOONY

Other planets have satellites, just like the Earth has the Moon.

(Celeste opens *Sidereus Nuncius* at the page describing Galileo's observations of 10th January 1610.)

PALLAS

Ce-leste!

CELESTE

(awestruck, ignoring Pallas)

Amazing!

LOONY

And the Earth itself is just one of many planets, revolving round the Sun.

Pallas glares at Celeste, hands on hips.

CELESTE

(sidling out awkwardly)

Sorry...

INT. LECTURE THEATRE

Celeste is wheeling a trolleyful of tea, biscuits and fruit into a seminar room.

SEMINAR SPEAKER

...Isaac Newton, building on the work of Galileo, realised the same force that pulls an apple -
(glances at the fruit basket on the trolley)

Celeste, seizing the opportunity, tosses the speaker an apple. She takes a bite, then drops it to the ground. The audience laughs. Celeste sits down at the front, chin in her hands, and watches the talk in wonder.

SEMINAR SPEAKER

(continuing)

- also tugs at the Moon, and everything else we can see in the Universe...

Pallas appears in the doorframe, arms folded, glaring, tutting, though Celeste does not see her.

The speaker flips over to the next slide, bearing the title "Dark Matter".

SEMINAR SPEAKER

...and some things we can't.

Celeste puts up her hand, tentatively. The speaker turns toward her.

SEMINAR SPEAKER

Yes?

CELESTE

Excuse me, I was just wonder-

PALLAS

(through her teeth)

Celeste!

Pallas shakes her head, gesturing outside, and handing Celeste a broom. Celeste follows her out, downcast.

INT. LIBRARY

Celeste is hiding in a secluded reading room in the Observatory Library. She reads a book about Dark Matter, shaking her head at the horribly complex equations. Her soft toy elephant, EDDINGTON, sits on the table.

In the room sits QUICKSILVER, scribbling notes in a vast, ancient tome - the Grand Book - occasionally glancing up at Celeste.

CELESTE
 (looking at equations)
 I'll never understand this,
 Eddington!

PALLAS (O.S.)
 Celeste!

CELESTE
 (burying head in hands)
 I'm so rubbish at maths.

PALLAS (O.S.)
 (getting closer)
 Celeste!!

Celeste sinks down in her seat, hiding.

QUICKSILVER
 Who's the Wicked Witch of the West?

CELESTE
 My boss. I hate her. She thinks I
 think I'm too good for this job.

QUICKSILVER
 Maybe you are too good for this
 job... Celeste?

CELESTE
 General Dogsbody, more like. You?

QUICKSILVER
 Some people call me the space
 cowboy.
 (doffs his cap)
 But you can call me Quicksilver.

CELESTE

Quicksilver... weird! Want to hear a secret?

QUICKSILVER

Oh, do tell. I love secrets. They're my speciality.

CELESTE

I'm getting out. I got an interview, at the Observatory. I'm going to be an Astronomy student, for real. Ditch this dead-end job for good.

QUICKSILVER

Sweet. Want to see *my* secret?

Quicksilver gestures her to the GRAND BOOK, lying on a tabletop.

CLOSE UP ON - GRAND BOOK

CELESTE

It's beautiful! What's it about?

QUICKSILVER

(snorts)

What's it *not* about!

Celeste reaches out to touch the book.

QUICKSILVER

(blocks her hand with cane)

Don't touch! It's very very valuable.

CELESTE

How much?

QUICKSILVER

As much as this whole Univers-

(clears throat)

-ity. Never touch it, and never, ever open it, *capisce*?

CELESTE

Why? Is it the next *Harry Potter* or something?

QUICKSILVER
Something like that.

QUICKSILVER
(hides behind a bookshelf)
Look out, your Evil Stepmother
approaches. The Handsome Prince
beats a hasty retreat!

PALLAS
(scornfully looking at
Celeste's book)
What's this? "Dark Matter"?
Nonsense!

CELESTE
You don't think it's amazing? Most
of the Universe is invisible, but
we can still *feel* it through
gravity!

PALLAS
There's only one sort of "dark
matter" you need to worry about...

Pallas hands lavatory cleaning equipment over to Celeste,
exiting.

QUICKSILVER
(reappearing, as if from
nowhere)
I wouldn't stand for that!

CELESTE
(squirting detergent from the
bottle toward the receding
figure of Pallas)
Bang!

Celeste blows over the nozzle, as if it were a smoking gun,
and smiles saucily at Quicksilver.

INT. LECTURE THEATRE

PROFESSOR KARL LUTWIDGE, stern and curmudgeonly, stands tweed-jacketed and elbow-patched next to an old-fashioned blackboard, which is crammed full of convoluted GR tensor calculations, quantum mechanical path integrals and Group Theory. He declaims, with a slight German accent, in front of a (very poorly attended) audience of students whose expressions show a mixture of boredom and terror.

Celeste stands outside, listening by the doorway. One of the students, STU DENT, rebelliously lobs a ball of paper at Lutwidge; the other students laugh approvingly, but Lutwidge appears not to notice.

LUTWIDGE

...because that is what the equations tell us. And numbers never lie.

STU DENT

(after an awkward silence)
But what's the *point*?

LUTWIDGE

(genuinely puzzled)
Point?

A distant clock chimes, and the students file out hastily. Celeste enters the room.

LUTWIDGE

(seeing Celeste in her cleaner's uniform)
Could you hurry, please? I'm expecting someone.

CELESTE

(puzzled)
Hmm? Oh!
(taking off her apron)
That would be me! Sorry...
(offers her hand; he doesn't take it)
I'm Celeste.

LUTWIDGE

You? You are here about the MSc application?

CELESTE

(breathlessly)

Yes! I love astronomy. That student was wrong: there absolutely *is* a point to it! The Universe is just so beautiful!

LUTWIDGE

(browsing through Celeste's MSc application)

Astrophysics is not all pretty posters and colourful coffee-table magazines, you know. Without a sober dose of calculation, all the Hubble pictures in the world are worthless scraps of wrapping paper.

CELESTE

(downcast, taking a seat)

If you say so.

LUTWIDGE

To which end, I would like you to do this.

(throws an exam paper onto the desk)

Numeracy test. You have one hour.

(exits, slamming door)

Celeste stares at the paper without opening it. Time passes; she does not touch the paper. She switches on her iPod, leans back, shuts her eyes, and listens to the music...

Zoom into the iPod screen, showing a video of Celeste walking back to the library, dejected. This swells to become the next scene:

EXT. FOOTPATH OUTSIDE OBSERVATORY AND LIBRARY - TWILIGHT

Celeste returns to the library, feeling glum, wistfully glancing at the observatory domes and at McLooney working diligently within. McLooney smiles at Celeste, but she puts her head down in shame.

The song that Celeste was listening to on her iPod ("Things That Might Have Been") swells to fill the soundtrack.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Celeste lies flat on her back on the grass beside the observatory domes, wistfully watching the stars whirl overhead.

INT. OFFICE - LATER

Lutwidge enters the empty room. He takes the untouched exam paper from the desk, shakes his head, and drops it, together with Celeste's MSc application, into a waste basket. It hits the bottom with a dull thud.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Celeste enters the library.

CELESTE
(muttering to herself)
What *is* the point?

The library is dark and almost deserted. The two students from before are fooling around.

STU DENT
(rolling a sheet of paper into
a tube)
I'm Galileo... come and see my big
telescope!

SOPHIE MOORE
(drops screwed up balls of
paper)
Behold the law of freefall!

One of the balls of paper hits Celeste on the head.

STU DENT
(sniggering)
Hey babe, looks like you just
discovered gravity!

SOPHIE MOORE
Heavy!

CELESTE
Get lost!

Celeste strolls briskly away.

CELESTE

Arrogant brats. Scientists are so lame. We'd be better off without them, wouldn't we, Eddington?

Celeste eventually enters the reading room she had visited earlier, now in darkness.

CELESTE

There's got to be an easier way.
(noticing Grand Book)
Perhaps you can tell me the answer.

Celeste approaches gingerly, checking that no-one is around. On the cover is written an inscription, in hieroglyphs. As Celeste touches the book's cover, it seems to glow, and the Egyptian script is replaced by its English translation:

CLOSE UP ON COVER TEXT - *The Book of Thoth. All the wisdom of men and immortals/Earth and stars lie in this Book/A curse on those who dare to look!*

Celeste reads aloud from the cover:

CELESTE

"All wisdom of men and...
immortals"? "A curse on those who look" - what have I got to lose?
I'm cursed already.

The book seems almost alive. She opens it, very nervously, at a random page.

CLOSE UP ON PAGES - text from *The Book of Sand* by Jorge Luis Borges on the left; **this page** of the screenplay for *The Starry Messenger* on the right.

Celeste turns to the next page. On the left is a page from the manuscript of Galileo's *Sidereus Nuncius*, showing the sketch of Jupiter's satellites. On the right is a portrait of GALILEO, with text underneath in an ornate font which she reads aloud:

CELESTE

"*Philosophy is written in this Grand Book, the Universe... Unless one comprehends the Language of Mathematics...one is wandering in a dark Labyrinth.*" A Dark Labyrinth!? Even a book thinks I'm stupid!

Stu Dent appears in the doorway behind her, laughing and throwing a ball of paper at her. In anger, Celeste rips out a bunch of pages.

CELESTE
(to the book)
Not so priceless now!

She screws up the paper, and throws it at the Stu Dent.

CELESTE
Get lost!

A thunderous sound rumbles through the library, as if the sky had split open. The pages of the book flicker of their own accord, blowing a gale. The room seems to spin, at first slowly, then faster and faster, until all is a blur.

EXT. DESERT WASTELAND (ALTERNATE REALITY)

The spinning stops, and Celeste finds herself on a hilltop, surrounded by a barren wilderness in which scant signs of humanity are evident. Quicksilver is at her side. Pages flap about in the breeze like butterflies.

QUICKSILVER
Temper, temper!

CELESTE
What happened? Where's the library?

QUICKSILVER
You're in it. Or would be. If it had ever existed.

CELESTE
Existed? I didn't do anything! Did I? What did I do?

QUICKSILVER
Nothing much, only untied Time.

CELESTE
Untied Time? But it was just a stupid book!

Quicksilver holds up each half of the torn page and reads.

QUICKSILVER

Ahem. "Philosophy is written in *this Grand Book, the Universe.*" You just ripped up the Universe. Nice one!

CELESTE

Ripped up the Universe? It doesn't look *too* bad.

QUICKSILVER

Oh no, it's Paradise on Earth. No *boring* scientists carping on about climate change and saturated fat, yap yap yap.

CELESTE

What do you mean, no scientists?

QUICKSILVER

That's what you wished for, wasn't it?

Quicksilver gestures out over the barren wasteland in front of them.

QUICKSILVER

Welcome to Wonderland, Alice.

CELESTE

Sweet.

EXT. RUINED VILLAGE - DAY

Celeste and Quicksilver walk around the ruins of a village. People - the GIBBERS - skulk sullenly beneath simple shelters, dressed in rough clothing, grovelling in the mud. Others are hoarding piles of a golden fruit - the only crop that seems to grow in this place - like vultures standing over a carcass, viciously fending off any would-be thieves.

QUICKSILVER

Guess this must be Downtown.

CELESTE

Bustling. Know any good night clubs?

QUICKSILVER

No need for nightclubs. Life's a peach!

(at lightning speed, takes one
of the pieces of fruit)
Quite a tea party. No teachers. No
taxes. No traffic jams.

They notice a group of gaunt-looking Gibbers lying, exposed
to the sun's intense glare, outside the village. She
recognises one of the students amongst them.

QUICKSILVER
(cruelly)
No medicine. No morals. No mercy.

CELESTE
(going over to help)
What happened to them?

QUICKSILVER
Bubonic plague, looks like.

Celeste backs away suddenly at the mention of the disease.

CELESTE
Why does no-one help?

QUICKSILVER
They don't know how. Probably don't
even notice. What with all the sand
to bury their heads in.

Muttering words in an unknown tongue, the diseased outcast
clutches imploringly at Celeste, who steps back in fright.

GIBBER (FORMERLY STUDENT)
(apparently in panic)
Pu-ka-jib-ri-nge-lo-mo-ti!

QUICKSILVER
I think he likes you. You could be
their Queen. And I their King...

Celeste shudders...

CELESTE
(upset)
Where did it all go wrong?

QUICKSILVER

This is a world for people who look up the answer in the back of the book without even trying. Thought you'd feel at home. Queen of the Quitters.

CELESTE

(angry)

You don't know what I want!

QUICKSILVER

That's why, wily snake that I am, I'm giving you a choice.

Quicksilver wipes the fruit on his cloak and tosses it to Celeste.

QUICKSILVER

Would you Adam and Eve it? it always comes down to fruit... Eat!

CELESTE

What will happen?

Celeste cautiously sniffs the apple. Suddenly, the colours all around her seem to become brighter; the trees seem to blossom; the people, looking younger, scamper, laughing, through the verdant foliage in gleaming white robes.

QUICKSILVER

An apple a day keeps the doctor away. And the teachers and the professors and all those bearded bores.

CELESTE

And if I refuse?

As the fruit's scent dies away, the scene returns to its earlier harshness and drabness.

QUICKSILVER

Come with me, we'll fix history. Give reality the old nip-tuck. *But it won't be easy.* Go out with a whimper or a bang. Your choice.

CELESTE

What have I got to lose?

(making as if to bite into the apple, then changes her mind and smashes it on the ground)

Bang.

(Just before they vanish, Celeste believes she catches sight of Pallas watching over the Gibbers... Celeste inhales suddenly in horror!)

THE INTERSTICES OF TIME

It feels as if they are falling, all the world rushing upwards like a multicolour waterfall turned upside down.

QUICKSILVER

Thought you'd do that.

(beat)

You humans, you're not yet ready for Paradise.

CELESTE

We humans? So what does that make you, then?

QUICKSILVER

They call us The Imperishables. We stand aloof from Space and Time, in a place called Empyrean, straddling the cracks between dimensions. I am their agent - a talent scout, if you like -

The rushing stops abruptly, and they find themselves in:

EXT. A COBBLED STREET (RENAISSANCE PADOVA) - DAY

QUICKSILVER

(continuing)

and, Celeste Heavens, we've been watching you.

CELESTE

Watching me? You mean you set me up!

QUICKSILVER

(wounded)

Me? We have laws. Not allowed to intervene directly.

(shrugs)

Health and Safety! Only the Primum Mobile-

CELESTE

Then what can I do? I'm just an
ordinary girl in -

Quicksilver takes a quill out of his hat band and scribbles frantically in the Book. Suddenly, Celeste's clothing (muddy from their sojourn in Gibberland) changes to a luxurious period dress.

CELESTE

(continuing, delighted)
in a very nice dress!

QUICKSILVER

(smug)
That's why they call me Mr
Fahrenheit! Turns into a pumpkin at
midnight, though.

Quicksilver storms off down the street. Celeste struggles to keep up with him in her skirts.

QUICKSILVER

(calling back)
Welcome to four hundred years ago,
by the way.

CELESTE

Time travel? You do that too?

QUICKSILVER

The Renaissance. Italy. Padova. And
now, Dorothy, we just follow the-
(looks at dirty cobbles)
yellow brick road.

CELESTE

(sarcastically)
We're off the see a wizard, then?

QUICKSILVER

Of sorts. You may have heard of
him. Especially as you had the
discourtesy to rip up his picture.

Quicksilver holds up the halves of the portrait from the Book.

QUICKSILVER

He's called Galileo. And you're here to see he goes out with a bang.

EXT. A COBBLED STREET (OUTSIDE GALILEO'S HOUSE)- LATER

Quicksilver and Celeste approach Galileo's house.

QUICKSILVER

(in media res)

...otherwise, well, you've seen what will happen.

CELESTE

OK... but why can't we just, like, sellotape it back together?

QUICKSILVER

(shakes head)

Have to fix History at the source. Besides, this is no ordinary paper, you know, it's-

Quicksilver is interrupted by a racket coming from the window/balcony above. GALILEO GALILEI and ROBERTO BELLARMINO argue (unseen).

GALILEO (O.S.)

Negate la logica e contraddite l'osservazione!

BELLARMINO (O.S.)

Dilegiate l'autorità di Aristotile e della Bibbia in se!

QUICKSILVER

Sounds like we've arrived.

CELESTE

What's all that about?

QUICKSILVER

Lovers' tiff.

Quicksilver grabs Celeste's nose and forces her to drink from his phial of ink.

QUICKSILVER

Here, drink. You might find-

GALILEO (O.S.)

Avete troppa fede in vecchi

(apparently in English)

books by bearded men! Only the book
of Nature reveals God's true plan.

CELESTE

(shoving Quicksilver away)

Va via!

QUICKSILVER

...you can suddenly speak Italian.

CELESTE

How are we going to get in?

BELLARMINO (O.S.)

Galileo, my friend, logic can be
twisted and the senses deceived.

QUICKSILVER

I'm working on it.

GALILEO (O.S.)

You would deny the evidence of your
own eyes? Watch, Cardinal!

Two items of fruit - an apple and a large watermelon -
plummet from a window above. The melon shatters on the
ground, but the apple lands in Quicksilver's palm. He
squints at it quizzically, before dropping it to the ground.

BELLARMINO (O.S.)

Just as Aristotle said! The heavy
one fell faster, dragged to earth
by its sin!

QUICKSILVER

Oh, forgot to mention, only you can
actually see me. Or hear me.

(shrugs)

Security regulations.

CELESTE

Great... That still doesn't solve
the problem of how-

Celeste thinks she sees Pallas, lurking, out of the corner of her eye... when all of a sudden, a large watermelon explodes all over her head, and she collapses to the ground in a swoon.

QUICKSILVER

Bloody typical.

INT. GALILEO'S HOUSE - AN ANTECHAMBER

Celeste wakes to a muffled sound of music. She is slumped in a chair. Raised voices can be heard coming from an adjoining room. Quicksilver stands by the door, spying on the interlocutors (Galileo and Bellarmino). A small girl, VIRGINIA, sits by Celeste's side, listening to her iPod with hands over the earphones, to block out the argument.

BELLARMINO

You are in grave danger unless you deny your... your *heresy* that the Earth moves round the Sun! Your sordid belief that the Heavens are corruptible like the Earth - this sink of all dull refuse of the universe!

CELESTE

(to Virginia, seeing iPod)
Hey! You shouldn't have that!

QUICKSILVER

Shh! You're missing the best bits!

GALILEO

(with stifled anger)
The heavens are not incorruptible!
The Moon has mountains! The Sun has spots! The planets are *worlds* just like the Earth! Johannes Kepler agrees with me...

CELESTE

(to Virginia again)
I said, you shouldn't have that!

BELLARMINO
(with contempt)
That Lutheran, fortune-teller,
son-of-a-witch!

QUICKSILVER
Uncalled for!

BELLARMINO
You are worthier than he, my
friend!

VIRGINIA
(removing earphones)
I'm sorry. But it's so clever! Did
you make it?

GALILEO
"My friend"? You were still
Giordano Bruno's "friend",
Bellarmino, while you watched him
burn!

QUICKSILVER
Miaow!

CELESTE
(trying to listen to the
argument)
Not exactly...

BELLARMINO
Think of your children! Of poor
Virginia! I implore you!

QUICKSILVER
It's like *Jerry Springer* in there.

VIRGINIA
(at the mention of her name,
turns quickly to Celeste)
What's your name?

BELLARMINO
I cannot protect you from the
Inquisition. Or their fire.

CELESTE
Celeste.

GALILEO

Then leave!

QUICKSILVER

Talk to the hand!

Bellarmino storms out, and Galileo slams the door after him.

VIRGINIA

(fighting back tears)

Celeste! How beautiful! Like the stars... I'm Virginia.

Seeing her distress, Celeste comforts her.

VIRGINIA

(more composed, looking at iPod)

My father makes magical things too. Come on, I'll show you!

QUICKSILVER

Now you're talking!

INT. GALILEO'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

On tabletops are strewn manuscripts, calculations and sketches of the moon - exactly as published in *Sidereus Nuncius*. On others are placed experimental devices - pendulums and inclined planes. At the window stands the telescope.

VIRGINIA

This glass - lens - scoops up starlight and bends it to a point. Then this one makes it bigger. I've found so many things with it: look!

QUICKSILVER

Precocious little pipsqueak.

Virginia adjusts the telescope, and beckons Celeste to look through. Celeste is startled to see Jupiter with his retinue of moons that we have come to call Galilean.

CELESTE

It's beautiful! Like I could almost touch...

Celeste is cut short by the sound of music, and she sees Galileo sitting with his back to them by the fire, strumming a woefully out-of-tune lute.

GALILEO

The Harmony of the Spheres is a little off-key tonight...

QUICKSILVER

Yeah! play us some funky Hendrix licks, man!

VIRGINIA

Daddy... you're *freezing!*
(touches Galileo's hands)
The cold makes you sick, remember!

CELESTE

Le me crank the central heating...
the *fire* up a notch.

GALILEO

(a glint in his eye)
That bundle of paper on the desk...

Celeste picks up a freshly written manuscript from the desk. She is about to toss it, nonchalantly, into the flames, when she sees it is filled with sketches and calculations. With a gasp, Celeste recognises the drawings of the Moon and Jupiter from *Sidereus Nuncius*...

CELESTE

(reading the title page)
"Sidereus Nuncius"...

QUICKSILVER

We've seen this before, haven't we?

CELESTE

"The Starry Messenger!"
(aghast)
You can't destroy this! It's your work!

GALILEO

(with gallows humour)
Burn that; or they will burn me instead.

QUICKSILVER

That would calm your creaking
bones!

CELESTE

(taking a deep breath)

A bundle of paper may warm this
tiny room...

QUICKSILVER

Uh-oh... speech ahoy!

CELESTE

(continuing)

...but these discoveries will light
up the whole world!

Quicksilver groans and buries his head in his hands.

INT. GALILEO'S WORKSHOP - LATER

Virginia sits at the telescope, watched by Quicksilver.
Galileo tunes his lute, talking to Celeste.

GALILEO

My father discovered, tuning a lute
is all a matter of *mathematics*...

Virginia runs over from the telescope to Galileo, tugging at
his sleeve.

VIRGINIA

Daddy! Look at this!

GALILEO

Later, Virginia.

QUICKSILVER

(eye to the telescope)

Curiouser and curiouser...

GALILEO

We twist the peg to tighten the
string...

Galileo turns the peg, and strums the lute tunefully.

GALILEO

(continuing)

...now the Angels sing! *Observation*

(points to his eyes)
and Reason
(points to his head)
together unveil the secrets of
Harmony and of Heaven itself.

CELESTE
Like your magic tube... your
telescope... lets us touch the
stars! Shows us a bigger world:
(clears throat, and quotes:)
*"There are more things in Heaven
and Earth than dreamt of in our
philosophy..."*

QUICKSILVER
(applauds)
You'll win an Oscar for sure...

CELESTE
So what if the Earth isn't at the
centre!

GALILEO
(laughs)
You, a mere maiden, see what
Cardinals and Kings cannot!
(waxing lyrical)
The evidence of the senses! On that
bedrock we can build a tower of
knowledge stretching to the stars,
until...

Galileo tightens the tuning peg until the string SNAPS!

GALILEO
(continuing, suddenly
dejected)
...until those who refuse to see
tear it down in spite.

CELESTE
So you're just going to give up,
then?

GALILEO
(shakes head)
To turn back the tide of two
thousand years' tradition requires
unshakeable evidence.

VIRGINIA
(impatient)
Daddy!

GALILEO
In a while, Virginia. Until then,
my castles
(takes manuscript page off
Celeste and holds it aloft)
are made of sand and smoke.
(throws a page onto the fire)

CELESTE
You're forgetting, senses don't
just give us evidence; they give us
pleasure! The Universe is
beautiful!

QUICKSILVER
You wouldn't say that if you saw
the state of my bedroom.

GALILEO
Very well. But even the prettiest
statue will crumble
(throws another page onto
fire)
unless hewn from the hardest rock.

QUICKSILVER
Touche! Remember the pumpkin.
(glances at watch)

CELESTE
(now getting desperate)
Think what it will do for ordinary
people, like me, like Virginia...
You say we're all made of the same
stuff as the *stars*, right? Maybe
that's what your Cardinals and
Kings are afraid of! There's a
little spark of heaven in all of
us!

GALILEO

(shakes head)

Without *experimental* proof, I'm no better than my enemies: just another old man with a beard telling people what to think.

Galileo makes to throw the page with the Jupiter sketch onto the fire. Celeste stares after it in horror.

VIRGINIA

(stamping in indignation)

DADDY! Will you look at this?

QUICKSILVER

Same...

Celeste remembers the image she had seen at the eyepiece, comparing it with the sketch in Galileo's hand. She realises that the moons have noticeably shifted between the two.

QUICKSILVER

...but different.

CELESTE

Signor... I think you should pay closer attention to your daughter.

Galileo goes over to the telescope, shaking his head.

GALILEO

(suddenly astonished, looking back and forth from the eyepiece to the sketch)

And yet... it moves!

QUICKSILVER

(bows and grins sycophantically)

Magnifico!

Celeste smiles politely, curtsies, and quickly exits, closing the door behind her, leaning against it.

CELESTE

Eureka.

Quicksilver snaps his fingers. They rush through time.

THE INTERSTICES OF TIME - AGAIN

CELESTE

What happens next?

QUICKSILVER

He publishes *The Starry Messenger*.
Lands him in hot water; but he
escapes the flames. The rest is
history.

CELESTE

And Virginia?

QUICKSILVER

Enters a convent in a few years.
Calls herself *Maria Celeste*.

CELESTE

You're joking!

(beat)

So everyone lives happy ever after,
right? I can go home now?

QUICKSILVER

Mmm, not quite.

Quicksilver scribbles in the book, and their surge through
time accelerates.

EXT. A MEADOW - DAY

They emerge in a bright, sunlit meadow. Quicksilver holds up
the Book; several pages are still tattered.

QUICKSILVER

Gotta sew a few more stitches in
time.

Celeste looks crestfallen. Quicksilver strides ahead.

CELESTE

You never did tell, what *is* this
book, really?

QUICKSILVER

Human astronomers simulate the
Universe in computers, don't they?

CELESTE

I think so, yes.

QUICKSILVER

Well, ours got so good that...
 (grins)
*good as the real thing, you could
 say.*

CELESTE

(thinking out loud)
 The Universe contains the Book...

Quicksilver shows her the back cover of the Book. It depicts an Ouroboros serpent looped around a complex geometric pattern.

QUICKSILVER

The snake eats its own tail.

CELESTE

...but the Book contains the
 Universe! How very mystical.

QUICKSILVER

(marching on)
 Keep up! We've some more debugging
 to do.

They stroll toward an orchard where a man - ISAAC NEWTON - dressed in late 17th Century clothing, sits, pondering, beneath a tree.

QUICKSILVER

(sniffs in the fresh air)
 Ahh! Such a fine place to escape
 the ravages of the Great Plague!

CELESTE

Where...? When...?

QUICKSILVER

Lincolnshire. 1666. And like I
 said:
 (picks up one of many
 windfalls lying on the ground)
 it always comes down to fruit.

Quicksilver hands Celeste the apple, and nods his head in Newton's direction. Celeste guesses what he means, takes a run and shies the apple toward Newton's head...

Newton rubs his head and goes back to his pondering.

Celeste and Quicksilver shake their heads in frustration. Celeste climbs a ladder propped against the tree, and shakes the tree violently, showering Newton with apples.

NEWTON
Oo! Ee! Ow! D'oh!

Newton spies one apple blemishes in a pattern reminiscent of the lunar surface.

NEWTON
(quizzically)
Huh?
(slowly working it out)
Ah! just as it pulls the apple...

(Celeste mouths the following words of Newton impatiently, as if willing him to make the revelation.)

NEWTON
(continuing)
the Earth pulls the moon!
(bites into the apple)
Mmm...! Moon!

Celeste falls out of the tree... almost landing on top of Newton... but instead she finds herself on:

EXT. A DESERT ISLAND - SOLAR ECLIPSE - 1919

ARTHUR EDDINGTON and his assistant, HECTOR HODGE, are setting up photographic equipment in a small hut on the island of Principe during a solar eclipse. Totality is approaching. Eddington nervously keeps checking his pocket watch and squinting at the sky. Hodge idly throws stones into the water.

ARTHUR EDDINGTON
Almost time...

Outside, Quicksilver hands half a pile of photographic plates, stacked on a table, to Celeste, and pulls her aside.

ARTHUR EDDINGTON
Hodge! the plates! quickly!

HODGE
Yes, Professor Eddington.

CELESTE
 (staring from Eddington the
 elephant to Quicksilver)
 Eddington! No way!

Hodge picks up a pile of dinner plates.

ARTHUR EDDINGTON
 The *photographic* plates, Hodge!

Hodge goes back for the correct sort of plates.

ARTHUR EDDINGTON
 (reminiscing)
 I promised Einstein he'd make the
 cover of *Time Magazine* if the
 deflections confirm the
 Relativistic prediction.

A coconut falls from a nearby palm and hits Hodge's head,
 sending him sprawling and the precious photographic plates
 shattering into shards.

QUICKSILVER
 That's one deflection they didn't
 predict.

ARTHUR EDDINGTON
 (leaving the hut in alarm)
 Hodge?!

Celeste hands Eddington the pristine plates. Eddington
 smiles at her, in amazement.

ARTHUR EDDINGTON
 My angel!

Quicksilver opens the Book at a page that shows the cover of
Time showing "Albert Einstein: Person of the Century".

(Celeste gasps in astonishment as, behind Quicksilver, she
 thinks she sees Pallas furtively slinking away from
 underneath the palm tree that had shed the coconut...)

MT. WILSON OBSERVATORY - 1929

EDWIN HUBBLE sits in his office, staring at a blackboard
 displaying a plot of recession velocity versus distance for
 a sample of galaxies.

HUBBLE
I don't get it, Milton.

In the office across the corridor, his assistant MILTON HUMASON is frantically searching through desk draws.

HUMASON
Who took my gum?!

Celeste (looking a little more weatherbeaten than before) and Quicksilver step out of a cupboard in Humason's office.

HUBBLE
The further away the galaxies are,
the faster they're moving from us!

QUICKSILVER
(nodding toward other room)
Hubble.

HUMASON
(to Celeste)
You got any gum?

Celeste holds out her hand, containing bubble gum.

QUICKSILVER
Bubble.

HUMASON
(takes gum, looks her up and
down)
Thanks. You the cleaner?

CELESTE
(indignant)
No I am *not* the cleaner!

HUBBLE
(calls)
Milton!

HUMASON
S'OK! I used to be!

Humason points to a photo of himself with a mop and bucket.

QUICKSILVER
Toil.

HUMASON
 (strolling toward Hubble)
 Look at me now!

HUBBLE
 (absent-mindedly)
 It's almost as if space itself
 were-

Hubble sees the Milton blowing up a bubble as he enters.

HUBBLE
 Expanding...!

The bubble bursts.

QUICKSILVER
 Trouble.

Celeste and Quicksilver go back into the cupboard.

THE INTERSTICES OF TIME

CELESTE
 What do you get out of this,
 anyway?

QUICKSILVER
 It's sort of a punishment. For past
 misdeeds.

CELESTE
 (*sotto voce*)
 You too, huh.

QUICKSILVER
 They might even give me my wings
 back.

CELESTE
 So you - you Impenetrables-

QUICKSILVER
 Imperishables.

CELESTE
 You've been to Earth before?

QUICKSILVER
 Oh yes. All the time.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY - MUCH LATER

Celeste and Quicksilver find themselves standing in an empty corridor, lined with lockers. Judging from Celeste's weary appearance, some considerable time, encompassing many an adventure, has elapsed. Quicksilver, however, appears as fresh and spritely as ever.

QUICKSILVER

And that just about wraps it up for today, folks.

(looks at watch)

If we hurry, we might still catch *The Simpsons!*

CELESTE

This... looks... familiar...

QUICKSILVER

(nonchalantly)

The one where Homer turns a toaster into a time-machine.

CELESTE

Are we home now?

QUICKSILVER

(shakes head)

Our odyssey's not quite over. And oddly enough, this really is 2001.

A bell rings.

CELESTE

Wait... I know this place. I used to go to school here!

The corridor rapidly becomes awash with schoolgirls.

QUICKSILVER

You'll love the next bit.

A girl - YOUNGER CELESTE - opens one of the lockers and gazes longingly at astronomy posters (circumpolar star trails and the planet Mercury) plastered inside.

QUICKSILVER

See anything familiar?

CELESTE

That... that's *me!*

QUICKSILVER

(sings)

"Just a poor girl from a poor
family."

Two other girls - VIOLA and MONICA - approach Celeste.
(Viola is nervous and gloomy, Monica is loud and brash.)

CELESTE

Oh my god... I remember this!

YOUNGER CELESTE

(picks up bundle of astronomy
posters, star charts, etc.)

Coming to Astronomy Club?

MONICA

No Space Invaders tonight, mate!

(holds up Physics textbook)

Got *boring* revision for tomorrow...

The girls stroll down the corridor.

VIOLA

I know, it's impossible! My sister
failed last year, and she's a
genius!

YOUNGER CELESTE

Should be alright. Long as there's
nothing about motion or gravity or
other maths stuff.

MONICA

That's exactly what it's on, mate!

Celeste stops dead, in shock.

YOUNGER CELESTE

But if I fail, then...

MONICA

(takes star chart off Celeste)

No Space Invaders... ever!

(rips chart in half)

QUICKSILVER

(sings)

"Easy come, easy go!"

VIOLA
(shaking head)
I'd give up now if I were you...

QUICKSILVER
Such nice friends you have.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY

The Younger Celeste sits, all alone, hunched up over a thick textbook, in tears, paper tissues strewn all over the desk.

Quicksilver and the older Celeste lurk behind bookshelves.

YOUNGER CELESTE
(mutters to self)
This is stupid!

QUICKSILVER
Tell me what happens next! I'm
dying to know.

CELESTE
Just let me go home! We fixed
history, didn't we? Why did you
bring me here?

YOUNGER CELESTE
There's got to be an easier way!

QUICKSILVER
You're here to teach yourself a
lesson.
(like a child)
Oh, tell me what happens, *please!*

YOUNGER CELESTE
(mutters to self)
I'll never remember all this!

CELESTE
(shakes head)
I was trying to memorise all the
answers.

QUICKSILVER
What a daft thing to do.

Younger Celeste turns the page; it's full of equations!

CELESTE
I lost my patience.

YOUNGER CELESTE
(tearfully)
This is impossible!

Younger Celeste tears several pages out of the textbook.

QUICKSILVER
(sarcastically)
I didn't see *that* coming!

Younger Celeste stands, screws the pages into a ball, makes a commotion and starts to walk out.

FLASHBACK - CLASSROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Girls are sitting hunched over exam papers. The camera floats toward one empty desk.

CELESTE (V.O.)
Next day, I didn't come back.

Camera zooms in on the empty desk - labelled with the name "Celeste Heavens" - and the exam paper.

CELESTE (V.O.)
I just gave up after that.
(ironically)
The rest is history.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY

Quicksilver brings Celeste back from her reverie with a sharp click of his fingers.

QUICKSILVER
It doesn't have to be.

Celeste and Quicksilver exchange knowing glances.

CELESTE
(stepping from behind shelves)
Celeste.

The younger Celeste halts with a sharp intake of breath.

CELESTE

There *is* an easier way. C'mon, I'll show you...

(Pallas - disguised as a librarian - steps out from behind another bookshelf and watches them leave.)

INT. CLASSROOM

The two Celestes and Quicksilver are in an empty classroom, Quicksilver squatting like a baboon on the teacher's desk.

CELESTE

Someone once said to me, there's a book, and every true fact is written in it. Anyone can read it, but no library will loan it.

QUICKSILVER

Ooh! I like riddles!

YOUNGER CELESTE

(thinks)
The Internet?

QUICKSILVER

Ha!

CELESTE

Better than the Internet. Less geeky. More fun.

YOUNGER CELESTE

I give up.

CELESTE

Look around you.

YOUNGER CELESTE

(after a short while)
The world?!

QUICKSILVER

Groan... I hate riddles!

CELESTE

(nods)
Everything everybody knows is just sitting there, waiting to be found out. You just need eyes

(points to Younger Celeste's eyes)
 and cunning
 (points to her forehead)
 and the courage of your convictions.
 (points to her heart)
 Follow me!

INT. A STAIRWELL

Celeste and Younger Celeste climb to the top of a spiral staircase. Quicksilver is already at the top.

CELESTE
 (holding up two coins)
 A penny and a pound. Which will hit the ground first?

QUICKSILVER
 Ooh! can I keep them if I get it right!

YOUNGER CELESTE
 Well, the pound's heavier, so...

Celeste hands the younger Celeste the pound coin.

CELESTE
 Ready...? Go!

The two Celestes drop the coins. They hit the ground simultaneously.

YOUNGER CELESTE
 That doesn't make sense!

CELESTE
 Eyes!
 (points to her eyes)
 You have to trust them! Now, what happens if I join them together?

She sticks a penny to a pound with blu tack and hands it to the younger Celeste.

YOUNGER CELESTE
 The light penny will slow down the heavy pound... but together they're heavier, so... I'm confused!

QUICKSILVER

I'm confused!

YOUNGER CELESTE

(eventually, excited)

Unless... weight doesn't make any difference!

QUICKSILVER

The penny drops.

They drop the conjoined coins and an unjoined penny and pound. They all hit the ground simultaneously, with a triumphant clatter.

CELESTE

(points to younger Celeste's head)

Cunning. You see, the truth's just *there*, ready to be unlocked. No-one needs to *tell* you. You just need-

YOUNGER CELESTE

Conviction?

(places hand on heart)

CELESTE

(nods)

And you know what's best of all?

YOUNGER CELESTE

(rapt)

What?

QUICKSILVER

(equally rapt)

What?

CELESTE

There are secrets that *nobody* knows, just waiting to be found. Like buried treasure! And science is-

YOUNGER CELESTE

Like a treasure map!

CELESTE
 (smiling)
 I suppose so, yes!

Celeste the Senior takes Eddington out of her backpack and hands him to the younger Celeste.

CELESTE
 He's called Eddington. Keep him, so you'll never forget.

YOUNGER CELESTE
 (tearfully)
 Thankyou!

EXT. OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

Celeste and Quicksilver start to walk away.

QUICKSILVER
 The thing is, she did alright.

Quicksilver shows the torn page in the Book, now whole.

QUICKSILVER
 The curse is lifted.

CELESTE
 I don't understand; what have my problems got to do with-

QUICKSILVER
 Maybe you didn't see what was on the other side of that Galileo picture.

Quicksilver turns the page. The exam paper has changed; it now displays "Celeste Heavens" and "A*".

CELESTE
 An exam paper...
 (seeing her name on the paper)
 My exam paper! Then by ripping it up-

QUICKSILVER
 You and Galileo: flip sides of the same coin. Fixing *him* helped you fix *yourself*.
 (winks)
 Now *that's* cunning.

CELESTE

I said all along it was a set-up!

(tearful)

I don't know whether to kick you

(kicks him)

or kiss you.

(pecks him on the cheek)

QUICKSILVER

(abashed)

What can I say? We're a team. It's that irrepressible combination of cute girl and superbeing that just gets better every time.

CELESTE

Watch it; I'll kick harder next time.

(beat)

Can I go home now?

QUICKSILVER

Yeah. Sorta. Just one slight problem.

CELESTE

What?

QUICKSILVER

(shakes head)

You don't really belong here anymore. That Celeste, back there, the one who will pass all her exams, do a PhD and have a glittering career-

CELESTE

Go girl!

QUICKSILVER

(continuing, tenderly)

she's not you.

(beat)

There can only be one Celeste Heavens, and-

CELESTE

And I'm not the right one.

Quicksilver nods slowly, as the world whirls around them for the last time, ever faster and faster, brighter and more colourful. A patch of nebulosity, small and faint at first, glows large and brighter until it envelops them.

QUICKSILVER

Come home with me. Into the sunset.
A real Utopia, not like that false
one back there.

CELESTE

I thought you said humans weren't
ready for Paradise?

QUICKSILVER

We make an exception for heroes.

CELESTE

(bittersweetly)
Sweet.

They vanish in a blaze of light, as they enter the Empyrean.

INT. OBSERVATORY - A SPRING MORNING. 2009.

Celeste, now a successful Astrophysics PhD student, has fallen asleep at a computer terminal in the observatory dome, and has been having the strangest dream... In front of her, the computer crunches code, drawing complex patterns on the screen. Eddington the Elephant is sat atop the monitor.

[on the wall is a poem by William Blake, in which the lines

*We are led to believe a lie/When we see not thro' the eye/
God appears, and God is light/To those poor souls who dwell
in night*

are prominent]

ADAM "LOONY" MCLOONEY enters the dome.

LOONY

Another all-nighter? In the
observatory?! I thought you were a
hard-core theory chick.

CELESTE

(a little groggy)
Oh...

(quoting)

"We are led to believe a lie, when we see not through the eye" I like to see what I'm studying; otherwise: what's the point? May as well be...filling in tax returns.

LOONY

You can't see Dark Matter.

CELESTE

(shakes head)

What makes spiral galaxies swirl so? Threads together the cosmic web? The invisible elephant sitting on my bed.

(turns to her soft toy elephant)

Isn't that right, Eddington?

LOONY

You're weird. That's what I like about you.

(kisses her on the top of her head)

But could you hurry up and solve the Universe, please? I'm showing a bunch of schoolkids round here later...

CELESTE

(squinting at screen)

Solve the Universe...

LOONY

(continuing, grinning)

...and you know how tough *their* questions can be.

The computer stops, and a complex geometric figure - circular, concentric pattern that is reminiscent of star trails - flashes on the screen.

CELESTE

(raises eyebrows)

...funny you should say that!

Camera zooms into geometric figure on screen...

EPILOGUE - LECTURE THEATRE - 2029

...camera zooms out of the figure (labelled "Prime Mover?"), which is now part of a display in a hi-tech lecture theatre.

Celeste, now Head of Astronomy at the Observatory, is delivering a seminar in front of a rapt audience.

PROFESSOR CELESTE HEAVENS, FRS
(in media res)
 ...and that's how we -
(coquettishly)
 actually, me! - solved the mystery
 of Dark Matter.

Pallas wheels a trolley (filled with tea, biscuits and fruit) into the theatre. Celeste acknowledges with a smile.

PROFESSOR CELESTE HEAVENS, FRS
"...to see the world in a grain of sand, eternity in an hour." We believe the structure of everything in the Universe - all things in heaven and earth that are, have been or ever will be - are enciphered within this mathematical construct.

Dr Karl Lutwidge (now looking decidedly ancient) bursts in, excitedly, out of breath.

LUTWIDGE
(wheezes)
 Professor!

PROFESSOR CELESTE HEAVENS, FRS
(grinning at Lutwidge)
 For those with the imagination to see, of course. What is it, Lutwidge?

LUTWIDGE
(obsequiously)
 Phone call for you... from Stockholm... Nobel Prize Foundation...

The audience erupt into excited chatter, then give Celeste a standing ovation. Meanwhile, two agents of the Imperishables look on, unseen, and chat amidst the commotion.

PALLAS
Hello, old flame.

Pallas offers Quicksilver some of the bubble gum that she had (unbeknownst to us) purloined from Milton Humason...

QUICKSILVER
I trust you weren't watching me *all*
the time.

PALLAS
(sighs)
With your record, what else could
we do?

Quicksilver rolls his eyes.

PALLAS
(haughtily)
Seems you excelled yourself.

QUICKSILVER
(subdued)
The girl did good.

PALLAS
Oh, don't look so peeved. You know
it was the right thing to do.

Without her, none of this -
(drums fingers on Book)
none of *us* - would have been
possible.

QUICKSILVER
That's what I find so disturbing.

Zoom into the pattern on the rear cover of the Book - the one surrounded by the Ouroboros serpent. It is the same as the pattern that sits on Celeste's lecture slide. The Imperishables melt away into the Interstices of Time.