

## **SANTIAGO**

Comic Book Script by

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### CHARACTERS

RYAN, a religious pilgrim. American, white of Irish descent. Wears backpacker's clothes and a large pendant made of a scallop shell.

EDWARD, Ryan's boyfriend. American. Dresses gay chic.

FELIPE, an old man. Spaniard. He is thin and worn but in apparent good health for his age.

YOUNG FELIPE, late teens. Poor rural Spaniard, circa 1925. Slight and seedy-looking.

THE PILGRIM. Rural Irishman circa 1925. He is short, wiry, strong from field-work but not large.

ST. JAMES, apostle of Christ. He also wears the scallop-shell pendant.

"SANTIAGO"

INTERIOR - HOSTEL ROOM

A small room in a pilgrim's hostel, a free lodging. It is clean but poor, lit by a single bulb in an old fixture, furnished with a bunk bed and a chair. The furniture is old and scuffed, the linens worn, threadbare, repaired. The walls are old plaster, cracked but not crumbling. A large backpack and a pair of good, heavily-used boots on the floor.

RYAN is writing in his diary. He is dressed, his socks dirty from several days' use.

RYAN (NARRATING)

I was tired but also restless. I tried writing about my day --

RYAN'S DIARY

Day 22: Only 13 kilometers. The terrain here is flat and dull. Keeping a good pace is tough.

RYAN (NARRATING)

But I thought about the past.

INTERIOR - APARTMENT

EDWARD talks with Ryan in their apartment.

EDWARD

Why do you have to go walk across Spain to make your parents happy?

RYAN

I'm not doing it for my parents. I'm doing it for my family.

EDWARD

What's the difference?

RYAN

My family's bigger than my parents. I'll be the fourth generation to walk to Compostela. It's a family tradition. That means something.

EDWARD

That means you want to make your  
parents happy.

INTERIOR - BEDROOM

Ryan and Edward in bed together, Ryan clinging to  
Edward's back. Even asleep, Ryan looks distressed.

RYAN (NARRATING)

All our fights ended in bed, so  
they never really ended. So I  
never did explain it, that it was  
more than my family. It was my  
family's history, our story in  
this life. I wanted to be part  
of it, even if I didn't know why.

RYAN'S DIARY

50 kilometers to León. The  
guidebook says the terrain  
changes there. I look forward to  
green countryside.

INTERIOR - BEDROOM

Edward in bed with another man who is not Ryan.  
Ideally a similar pose to the previous bedroom  
image, though here suggestive of transience, either  
a one-night stand or a much shallower relationship.

RYAN (NARRATING)

I wondered who Edward was  
fighting with now.

INTERIOR - HOSTEL ROOM

FELIPE stands in the doorway.

FELIPE

Buenas tardes, señor.

RYAN

Buenas tardes.

FELIPE

It will soon be time to turn off  
the lights.

RYAN

Oh, yes. Of course. Thank you.

FELIPE

You keep a diary of your pilgrimage.

RYAN

Yes. Though I don't have much to write today.

FELIPE

This city is not much to write about. It has done badly here since I was young.

Ryan stands and offers his hand.

RYAN

I'm Ryan.

FELIPE

I am Felipe.

Felipe takes the chair and Ryan sits down.

RYAN

Do you run this hostel?

FELIPE

My children now. But I have worked here since I was a young man. It has been my duty.

RYAN

(intrigued)

Duty?

FELIPE

My duty to Santiago, to St. James. In thanks for saving my life. When I was young I was poor and angry. There were many more pilgrims then. I attacked Santiago's pilgrims and stole from them. What is the word -- bandit. I was a bandit.

RYAN

So what happened?

EXTERIOR - PILGRIM'S ROAD

A sunny day outside. A bend in a dirt road used by horses and people on foot. The terrain is flat and rocky, dry but not desert. THE PILGRIM is walking past some bushes, behind which YOUNG FELIPE waits.

FELIPE (NARRATING)  
I attacked a man one day.

Young Felipe menaces the Pilgrim with his knife. The Pilgrim looks more angry then scared.

FELIPE (NARRATING)  
But he got the better of me.

Young Felipe on the ground, a large bloody wound in his abdomen, face contorted in pain.

FELIPE (NARRATING)  
The pilgrim ran away, with my knife. I was left to die. So I prayed, to Santiago, asking him to spare my life.

VISION (EXTERIOR -- PILGRIM'S ROAD)

ST. JAMES kneels by Young Felipe's body, touching his forehead.

FELIPE (NARRATING)  
I told him I would serve him if he saved me.

INTERIOR - HOSTEL ROOM

FELIPE  
After my vision, I fell into blackness. I woke in hospital. A group of pilgrims had found me. They thought I was one of them, and carried me to town. I should not have lived, but I did. When I was well I came to work here; and here I am still.

Ryan is pale. He is astonished and terrified.

FELIPE  
Señor Ryan, what is it?

RYAN  
It's not possible.

FELIPE  
What?

Ryan closes his eyes and smiles ruefully.

RYAN  
I have a story to tell you.

INTERIOR - IRISH CHURCH

A small rural church made of gray stone. A young couple are getting married. The groom is the Pilgrim. The bride is plump and plain.

RYAN (NARRATING)  
My great-grandfather married young. He had little money.

EXTERIOR - FIELD

The Pilgrim, behind a horse-drawn plow.

RYAN (NARRATING)  
He worked hard for his new family. So hard, that he didn't have much energy left ...

INTERIOR - BEDROOM

The Pilgrim and his wife, in bed asleep. Echoes other bedroom scenes. Here the Pilgrim is asleep from exhaustion, his wife awake and concerned.

RYAN (NARRATING)  
... to make a family.

INTERIOR - HOSTEL ROOM

RYAN  
After two years of marriage, my great-grandparents had no children. The village began to gossip, and in the pubs ...

INTERIOR - RURAL PUB

A donnybrook, glasses and fists flying, and at the center The Pilgrim is connecting a hard punch with the nose of another man.

INTERIOR - HOSTEL ROOM

RYAN

A man died in the fight. There wasn't enough evidence for the constable, but the village priest demanded a great penance from my great-grandfather. He implied that without the penance, God would make sure there never were any children. So my father got on a boat for Spain.

EXTERIOR - PILGRIM'S ROAD

The same pilgrim's road as in the earlier scenes with Young Felipe, but seen by the Pilgrim.

RYAN (NARRATING)

My great-grandfather walked from the moment he got off the boat. He bought bread and meat in towns every two days.

Felipe approaches, his face angry, menacing with his knife.

RYAN (NARRATING)

He slept under trees for a few hours a night. He wanted to be done with it.

The Pilgrim has stepped inside Felipe's lunging arm. The Pilgrim's elbow is jabbing into Felipe's throat. Felipe has let go of the knife; it floats in the air just beyond his hand.

RYAN (NARRATING)

Once he was attacked by a bandit.

Felipe on the ground. In the distance, the Pilgrim running away.

RYAN (NARRATING)

My great-grandfather didn't even stop.

EXTERIOR - PILGRIM'S ROAD, NIGHT

Under a tree, the Pilgrim huddled under a yellow raincoat. It is raining.

RYAN (NARRATING)

But he knew what he had done.  
That night he prayed that the man  
who attacked him would live. In  
his dreams St. James visited him.

VISION

St James stands against a starry background. Above his outstretched hand the knife drips blood into a large scallop shell.

RYAN (NARRATING)

Keep the knife, St James told  
him.

On a surface, the knife, still bloody, and a scallop shell cradling a baby boy.

RYAN (NARRATING)

Keep this knife, and the Lord  
will bless you with one son, you  
and each of your descendents, so  
long as you keep the knife.

INTERIOR - HOSTEL ROOM

RYAN

Nine months after my great-  
grandfather returned home, his  
wife bore him his only child, a  
son. That son moved to America,  
and had one child, my father.  
And I am my father's only child.

Ryan opens one of the backpack's front pockets and removes something in a plastic bag.

RYAN

All of them walked to Compostela.

Ryan has removed the knife from the plastic bag. He holds it above his lap and stares down at it.

RYAN

All of them carried this knife.

The knife, in Ryan's open hand, point at the wrists and hilt past his middle finger. The wood handle is worn and dried. The blade is stained with rust in the same pattern as the bloodstain in the vision.

RYAN

It's your knife. I'm giving it back to you.

Felipe takes the knife gingerly and contemplates it.

FELIPE

But Señor, if I take the knife, you will not have a son.

Ryan looks wistful, bitter, resigned.

RYAN

No. I suppose not. Goodnight, Señor Felipe.

Felipe stands. Ryan sits, his head in one hand.

Felipe leaves.

#### INTERIOR -- HOSTEL SITTING ROOM

In a poor sitting room, two fat women in black sit crying. A young woman, pregnant, also in black, stands over them, talking on an old wall phone. Through a doorway is a reception desk. A middle-aged man, his back to the scene, stands behind the desk. Ryan, just visible, stands in front of it.

RYAN (NARRATING)

In the morning they told me the old man had died in his sleep. I wanted desperately to see him, but there was no way I could ask.

#### EXTERIOR -- PILGRIM'S ROAD

The same section of road where the attack took place. The scenery has changed. A new railroad track is up the hill, with wires running over it and a structure of signal equipment mounted on one side. Ryan is on hands and knees in the dirt.

RYAN (NARRATING)

A couple of miles outside of town  
my strength suddenly failed me.

Ryan close-up, face in the dirt, his eyes open but  
vacant.

RYAN (NARRATING)

I must have fainted.

VISION

A field of mottled red and black. On it, a few  
bright spherical points, burning hot like miniature  
stars.

RYAN (NARRATING)

I saw a darkness, with bright  
things floating through it.

The same field, but from farther away, with tens of  
bright points visible. The points faintly suggest  
a pattern, like constellations.

RYAN (NARRATING)

The bright things were us, all of  
us. They moved around, willful,  
independent, going wherever they  
thought they wanted to go.

The same field, from much farther still. There are  
now hundreds of points. A few are still random, as  
if part of a much larger background, but most of  
them clearly form the shape of a scallop shell.

RYAN (NARRATING)

But they weren't independent at  
all. They were part of something  
bigger, something they could  
never understand. Something too  
much, and too terrible, to know.

VISION (EXTERIOR -- PILGRIM'S ROAD)

Ryan lying on the road, face up, the same posture  
as the wounded Felipe. He is crying, his face  
contorted. St James kneels over him, touching his  
forehead.

THE END