

**JOURNEY TO SANTIAGO**  
**Six Scenes on growing up Catholic**

by  
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(Excerpt)

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## CHARACTERS

**Santiago**, sixteen to twenty-one.  
**María**, his mother, forty-five to fifty.  
**Crusader**, late twenties.  
**Carla**, eighteen.  
**Pablo**, twenty-five.

## SETTING

### **Scene 1**

Santiago's bedroom.

### **Scene 2**

Three years later. Same bedroom.

### **Scene 3**

Three months later. A room.

### **Scene 4**

Two months later. A living room.

### **Scene 5**

Two years later. A small painter's studio.

### **Scene 6**

Santiago and the Crusader onstage.

## Notes

The sets are not realistic.  
All characters speak in perfect English and have no accent.  
Names in Spanish are pronounced as correctly as possible.

## SCENE 1

Santiago's bedroom. No visible furniture. No bed.  
A Crucifix hangs on the back wall.

A hollow doorway stands stage right.

SANTIAGO

(To us:)

I'm thirteen when I tell my mother that I don't want to go to church anymore. She doesn't answer, at first, she just smiles and says: *You should go to confession. Tell the priest.*

(Beat.)

I don't want to go, but I do. This old man keeps asking me: *Do you touch yourself? Do you have impure thoughts?* I'm going through puberty, of course I touch myself! It's my only religion, my favorite sport... But he makes it sound so dirty...

(Beat.)

I just say: *No. Never. No thoughts. Father.* And then I think: *Shit!* I just lied in confession... Is there anything worse than that?

(Beat)

I get three "Hail Mary's" and one "Our Father" as penance... And all my sins are washed away... Except that I suddenly feel so curious... Sex and Sin...

(Beat.)

Next Sunday I'm still at church.

(Beat.)

You see, I have such Catholic Guilt. It's in my bones: Heaven. Hell. Mortal Sin. Salvation. Judgement Day. Doom.

(Beat.)

I think that I was afraid of hell for a while. I don't remember.

(Beat.)

Now it's purgatory.

(Beat.)

It took me almost three more years, but last week I finally said: *Mom, I'm not going to church next Sunday.*

María has appeared.

MARÍA

Why?

I don't want to.

SANTIAGO

That's your excuse?

MARÍA

It's not an excuse. It's my decision.

SANTIAGO

No, it's not. And you're going to mass--

MARÍA

No.

SANTIAGO

Santiago, I'm warning you--

MARÍA

Just tell me why, mom--

SANTIAGO

Because I say so.

MARÍA

I'm sorry, but that doesn't work anymore.

SANTIAGO

Pause.

Alright then... I'm asking you as an adult. One hour a week. That's all.

(Beat.)

Remember, you were baptized--

SANTIAGO

It wasn't my choice.

(Beat.)

*You* are Catholic, mom, not me.

Beat.

MARÍA

It's up to you, then.

(Beat.)

I guess you're finally old enough to make your own choices.

SANTIAGO

Okay. I'm not going anymore.

María is gone.

That night, there's a book on the Crusades on my bedside table, and a Crucifix on the wall. No note.

(Beat.)

Breakfast. School. Not a word.

(Beat.)

And today, when I woke up, she was gone to morning mass.

(Beat.)

I won.

(Beat.)

*I won.*

(Beat.)

I was skimming through her book and it's actually not that bad. It's bloody enough... But it screams faith, Catholic faith, in big red bloodstained words--

An 11th Century Spanish Crusader has appeared upstage right. He is tall and muscular, dark-skinned, unshaven. His sword is drawn.

A slow percussion is heard, like war drums.

CRUSADER

We fight the infidels for you--!

SANTIAGO

(Ignoring him:)

Like a sign from heaven--

CRUSADER

We *die* for you--!

SANTIAGO

Mindless. Stupid. Like him.

The Crusader raises his sword, gets ready to attack.

CRUSADER

Repent!

SANTIAGO

Turn the other cheek, Crusader.

Beat. Sword goes down.

I have to say, though: Faith by sword--

CRUSADER

Confess your sins!

SANTIAGO

...is definitely more interesting than faith by guilt.

CRUSADER

Your soul will burn in hell!

SANTIAGO

And this is what I get for my claim to freedom... This drone.

(Beat.)

Mom would just... Love you--

María appears, as if accidentally summoned. The Crusader looks at her curiously.

The drumbeat fades.

Oh, dammit!

MARÍA

Language, Santiago.

Not now, mom. SANTIAGO

I'm disappointed in you. MARÍA

I know. SANTIAGO

This is your son? CRUSADER

Beat.

Mom! SANTIAGO

Yes. He is. MARÍA

He has lost his way. CRUSADER

Maybe he just needs time-- MARÍA

No. No time. He must find the way of our Lord. CRUSADER

It's true. MARÍA

Do you follow Scripture? CRUSADER

Every day. MARÍA

The Ten Commandments? Our Lord's Word...? CRUSADER

MARÍA

When he was a child we read the Bible together. I told him Christ's parables at bedtime--

SANTIAGO

Red Riding-Hood was vetoed--

MARÍA

He was a very good boy.

SANTIAGO

I haven't changed--

CRUSADER

He will not attain Grace.

MARÍA

I know.

SANTIAGO

You *know*?

MARÍA

But I pray for him every night--

CRUSADER

Do you renounce Lucifer?

MARÍA

I do.

CRUSADER

Do you deny the Infidels who deface our Holy Land?

MARÍA

With all my heart!

CRUSADER

Then... Pray with me.

María and the Crusader fall to their knees. Lights focus on them.

Sacred music, like a choir of angels.

SANTIAGO

Oh, come on!

MARÍA

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy Name--

CRUSADER

*Pater noster, qui es in caelis,  
Sanctificetur nomen tuum.*

María stares at the Crusader in adoration.

*Adveniat regnum tuum.  
Fiat voluntas tua,  
Sicut in caelo et in terra.*

MARÍA  
(Entranced:)

Oh, Lord.

CRUSADER

*Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie.  
Et dimitte nobis debita nostra...*

MARÍA

Oh, my Lord!

SANTIAGO

Mom...?

CRUSADER

*Sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris.  
Et ne nos inducas in tentationem:  
Sed libera nos a malo.*

MARÍA

(In ecstasy:)

For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory,  
For ever and ever

They look at each other, entranced, climaxing:

CRUSADER

*Amen.*

MARÍA

*Amen!*

The music intensifies as they disappear.

Sudden silence.

Santiago is speechless.

## SCENE 2

Three years later. Same bedroom. Two chairs. Three small wooden crates. Papers and books are scattered around the room. The Crucifix still hangs on the back wall.

Santiago is both packing and throwing things away in silence.

Upstage right is the Crusader. He is kneeling down in prayer: Eyes closed, both knees on the ground, his hands and forehead pressed against the hilt of his sword.

María enters the stage and stands by the doorway, just outside the bedroom.

A phone rings offstage. Santiago looks up. Freezes. After five or six rings it stops.

María exits offstage.

Santiago finds the "Crusades" book. Opens it.

SANTIAGO

(Reading:)

"The Dark Ages were coming to an end when thousands of men decided to leave their homes, their wives, their children... And set off on a journey that would later be called the *Voyage of God*. The First Crusade had begun... They had one aim: to reclaim the holy land, the promised paradise, the sepulcher of Christ."

(Beat. To us:)

So simple. History books make everything seem so simple and straightforward... Clear dates, defined goals, perfect heroes... No choice. No doubt. Just destiny.

(Beat.)

Nothing is so simple.

The Crusader looks up. He is addressing an unseen person.

CRUSADER

Can you walk?

Santiago turns to look at the Crusader.

SANTIAGO

Oh. You again... Give up, already.

CRUSADER

We need to go on. It will be dark soon... We can still meet the rest of the group if we leave now...

María appears in the doorway and knocks.  
Santiago looks at her.

MARÍA

Busy?

SANTIAGO

I'm almost done.

(Beat.)

I just need to pack some books and throw away some shit-- Stuff-- Sorry.

(Beat.)

Is half an hour okay?

MARÍA

Take your time.

SANTIAGO

No. Half an hour.

MARÍA

Fine.

Beat. He looks around at the mess of papers and books. She walks into the room.

MARÍA (CONT'D)

So...? How are you feeling?

(Beat.)

I read somewhere that there's a beachside resort in the town. Perhaps you could apply for a summer job--

SANTIAGO

Mom, I'm busy.

MARÍA

Oh, me too, me too... So many things to do before we leave...

Looks around the room.

This house. It's almost a lifetime.

Beat. No reaction from Santiago.

But if you *do* get a summer job, you could take some time to think--

SANTIAGO

I don't want to *think*, mom.

Beat.

MARÍA

I'm sorry, Santiago... But that's not something you get to decide.

SANTIAGO

Like moving?

Beat.

MARÍA

That wasn't them on the phone--

SANTIAGO

You don't have to go with me, mom. Really.

(Beat.)

I can do this on my own.

It's fine.

MARÍA

I can. It's all my fault--

SANTIAGO

I know--

MARÍA

But we're going together.

(Beat.)

María looks at the Crucifix.

Aren't you taking that?

Santiago looks at the Crucifix.

No.

SANTIAGO

Beat.

Well, anyway... We just need to finish loading the car and we'll be on our way--

MARÍA

Shouldn't we wait till it gets dark? Sneak out?

SANTIAGO

Just finish packing, Santiago.

MARÍA

Right--

SANTIAGO

And don't joke--

MARÍA

I'm not--

SANTIAGO

MARÍA

No one's laughing.

SANTIAGO

I know, mom.

(Beat.)

I don't think you should go with me.

He starts to pack again, his back to her.

María exits.

The Crusader is still addressing an unseen person.

CRUSADER

Are you strong enough to walk? We are so close.

He gets up and walks downstage.

I should go, my friend. I should take your sword and place it on the Holy Crypt...

(Beat.)

Please, wake up...

SANTIAGO

(To us:)

I kissed a girl to spite the church. We made a child. We unmade him...

(Beat.)

I don't even love her.

(Beat.)

I wasn't ready.

(Pointing at the Crucifix:)

He was bleeding on me, that night. I looked up from my bed and saw him... All the wounds in his body had burst open, and blood was pouring on my face, in my mouth, I was drowning... I woke up.

(Beat.)

She had lost so much blood... And they wouldn't take mine.

CRUSADER

Goodbye, my friend. Say goodbye. Say something. Wake up.

SANTIAGO

Go, just go, just go...

CRUSADER

I can't.

SANTIAGO

Please.

The Crusader shakes his head.

I was outside the room as they performed the abortion, just waiting for my son to die... And I decided to finally read my mother's "Crusades" book... Still nothing, really, mostly facts, figures and religious bullshit... Except for a footnote. An unconfirmed story that the author had decided to place in fine print, like an afterthought: Two men, one of them an official Crusader, the other one his childhood friend... They set off together from northern Spain but had to stop near the Dead Sea because the friend was sick. Their group had to go on, they couldn't wait... And this Crusader remained with him and willingly stepped out of history and into a footnote.

(Beat.)

I dreamt about their last night together, and then the blood of Christ woke me up.

(To the Crusader:)

You were in my dream again.

The Crusader and Santiago look at each other.

You have to leave your friend behind.

CRUSADER

Why?

SANTIAGO

That's the way it works, Crusader. We're both supposed leave.

(Beat.)

We're the same.

María enters the room.



MARÍA

Are you keeping it?

SANTIAGO

Yes-- No. I don't know, mom.

María puts the book down. Looks at the Crucifix for a moment.

MARÍA

Well, it's yours now... None of my business.

SANTIAGO

Can I call her?

Beat.

MARÍA

No.

Beat.

SANTIAGO

Who else knows? At church, I mean.

MARÍA

Well, it hasn't been discussed... So I guess everyone.

They smile. Pause.

Where did you get the money?

SANTIAGO

Dad.

(Beat.)

He didn't ask what it was for.

MARÍA

Did you call him to say good-bye?

SANTIAGO

He knows I'm leaving.

Pause. She starts to walk away.

I'm tired, mom.

María approaches him and kisses his forehead. The Crusader touches his own forehead.

MARÍA

You're too young to be tired.

María starts to pull away but Santiago holds her hand. They look at each other. He pouts. She ruffles his hair.

SANTIAGO

I'm so sorry, mom.

(Beat.)

I messed up.

MARÍA

When I miscarried my second child...

(Beat.)

Rosa-- Why did I name her?

(Beat.)

I called my mother and cried like a baby. I was almost ten years older than you are now, and all I wanted was my mommy... So you can mess up all you want, okay?

SANTIAGO

Okay.

The phone rings offstage. Santiago lets go of his mother's hand, somewhat embarrassed. Pause.

MARÍA

It might be the movers--

Yeah.

SANTIAGO

María turns to leave.

If it's her--

She exits quickly.

After a pause, Santiago picks up the "Crusades" book and starts browsing for the footnote.

He looks at the Crusader.

Will you leave him?

I do not know.

CRUSADER

You have a choice.

SANTIAGO

Do you?

CRUSADER

I made her do it.

SANTIAGO

(Beat.)  
I pushed just hard enough... And I made her believe that it was her choice.

(Beat.)  
They may blame us both. But I know it was me.

CRUSADER  
If my friend dies tonight I can still reach the others.

SANTIAGO  
My son's already dead.

The Crusader raises his sword and starts to slowly walk downstage. He is ready to kill his friend.

CRUSADER

He will not survive the night... We have a mission.

SANTIAGO

No one has to know.

CRUSADER

No one has to know.

SANTIAGO

Just us.

Pause.

The Crusader is ready to strike but stops. Puts his sword down.

Silence.

CRUSADER

This is not the way.

SANTIAGO

I know. But it's too late now. For me. For her.

(Beat.)

I'm leaving.

(Beat.)

I'm leaving her.

(Beat.)

That's it.

CRUSADER

I will stay, Santiago.

SANTIAGO

With him?

(Beat.)

With me?

The Crusader doesn't answer. He goes upstage right and assumes the same position as in the beginning.

Santiago starts closing and labelling all the crates.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

He's never born.

He has no age.

For almost four months he has a father and a mother. And then he doesn't.

(Beat.)

She gives my son a name. For a while there's another Santiago in my family.

Then I'm the only one again.

(Beat.)

She starts bleeding that night, after the abortion, so they have to call an ambulance and rush her to the hospital. Everyone finds out at the same time... I think they hate me.

(Beat.)

I don't care.

(Beat.)

I know-- I *hope* that he can't feel, but somehow...

I keep hearing muffled noises.

Like a vacuum cleaner in water.

Then a little pain-- Not too much.

Then nothing.

Light slowly focuses on the Crusader as the stage grows darker.

Do I get a footnote, Crusader?