

THE SECRET OF THE CAMINO

*We all walk The Camino,
but humanity walks backwards to Finisterre*



JACOB ADLER

The Hungerland Band

*My PUCH motorcycle got stolen
at the concert of The Hungerland Band.*

*For good reason since
I had bought it with the money
I had stolen by putting a piece of paper
in the exchange drop of the telephone box
in front of our house.*

*So I had to walk all the way home, alone,
in the middle of the night.*

*But I walked with my head filled
with the sound of the band's Hammond organ,
like the sound of a church filled
with heavenly music.*

*And through all the walks and love
of my life, that has never changed.*



*I once met a man on the road
Who took a quite unusual path
Coming from the other direction
Passing by again and again
I felt a strange connection*

*He was not walking my way
The other way round, he was
Going in the right direction
Backwards you might say
In a sort of single procession*

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Preface: We all walk the Camino

We all walk the Camino, either the direct path to Santiago, the progressive path to Finisterre or the pathless path to Nowhere.

Whatever path you're on, just don't tie your shoelaces.

Because reaching your destination

Does not go in a horizontal line

You need time for contemplation

In the end you might find that you

Arrive where you began, right?

To come to this insight

You are guided step by step

Through all the hazards that take place

Every moment of enduring pains

During the Camino Francés

Chapter 1: Pamplona

*On the first day of my journey
Just recovered from a broken back
I injured my knee to a degree that
The next day I had to take a taxi
To the city of Hemingway*

I met Andrea sitting at a Pinxtos tapas bar in a backstreet of Pamplona. “Are you experienced?”, he asked. I furrowed my eyebrows not understanding his question, but decided to answer: “Absolutely, and what about you?” “Not at all,” he said, “I am an artist, not used to walking these kinds of stretches.”

“Then what are you doing here?” I asked, “and by the way, can I offer you a drink?” “Thanks,” he said, “I am on a holy mission.”

I bought us a bottle of red wine and said: "What do you mean? You don't look holy to me, excusez les mots."

"I am an artist living in fear," he replied. "I came to recognize this while painting a self portrait, and unconsciously expressing it in a state of seclusion and fear. I'll show you the portrait if you are interested."

"Sure," I said. "done some amateur painting myself, love to see it."

Andrea looked at his telephone and came up with a very nice painting, in which I immediately recognized a self portrait of a man in fear. A man with fear in his eyes, looking away, wearing a white shirt in a grim cellarlike surrounding.

"Impressive," I said, "takes me by the throat."

"You see," said Andrea, "I put in the white shirt, referring to the well known painting of Goya of the Third of May 1808, and had a background in mind referring to Velasquez' painting of the Nun."



“And how does your painting, or your fear, relate to your holy mission?” I asked.

“Well,” he said, “I heard about the Camino and the possibility of carrying a stone with you to leave something behind. To leave that stone behind at the Iron Cross, the highest point of the Camino. And since I could do with losing some weight too, I decided to give it a try.”

“What makes that a holy mission?” I kind of repeated.

“Well,” he said, “that is a story you might not believe. My little house and studio are across the lake where the Pope has his summer residency. And since I love sailing, you can find me any day on the lake. One of those days, to my surprise, there was a boat approaching from the other direction. When it got closer I saw Pope Francis standing straight up enjoying the firm breeze. The boat passed by closely, and I shouted: ‘I am going on the Camino Francis!’ ‘Have a good time,’ he said, ‘but don’t tie your shoelaces!’ And gone he was.”

“So that’s why I am on a holy mission,” he said,
“although I still don’t know what he meant. Because, let’s be
honest, walking the Camino without tightening your
shoelaces is completely nuts.”

“I see what you mean,” I responded, although I did
have an idea of Franciscus' intentions.

“Anyway, what makes you hang out around here?” he
said.

“My knee got strained the first day of the Camino from
the harsh rocky terrain,” I said, “and I don’t know if I can
continue.”

*It is still common to let bulls run
Through the streets of Pamplona
To grab them between the horns
I found a healer and the pleasant
Company of a sensitive artist*

Chapter 2: The Iruna Café

I met him at the bar
Showing all his trophies
Big-game shot in Africa
And stood firm in front of
His statue at the bulls' arena

The next day we met at the Iruna Café and sat at one of the square marble tables. Outside it had begun to snow, although it was already the end of March. We ordered a cup of coffee and admired the classic interior of the café.

“This is the place where Hemingway used to hang out,” I told Andrea, “particularly at the bar in the back of the café. Come along, I’ll show you around.”

At the little bar they had made some kind of exhibition of photos of Hemingway in his better times, and a little statue of him sitting on a stool at the bar.



“No man is an island, entire of himself,” Andrea mumbled, “if I remember it well, written in the preface of *‘For whom the bell tolls’*.”

We went back to our table where our coffee had been served in the meantime.

“Did you sleep well in the church?” Andrea asked. I told him I seemed to be the only one without a sleeping bag in the freezing cold of a church where they had managed to squeeze in like a hundred beds next to each other for the pilgrims. Very uncomfortable.

“To get back to your impressive painting,” I said, “are you willing to tell me something about the fear you expressed?”

“I work from gut feeling,” Andrea answered, “but I’ll give it a try.”

“There is this somehow existential fear of looking in a mirror and seeing nothing but an abyss of emptiness. Spending a life full of rich experiences and then being left behind with this gut feeling. I can’t handle it.”

“I was destined to become an artist. As a kid living in Rome I met Freud and Bacon, as a student in New York I bought postcards from Jean-Michel Basquiat himself in the street around the corner where I lived. I was relatively successful, have two wonderful kids, but, as I said, when I look into the mirror, I still stand at an abyss.”

I did not really know how to respond to Andrea’s ‘sort of confession’. I realized I recognized this feeling all too well. I just said, “I see what you mean, and I think you expressed this kind of existential fear very well in the painting. It’s not so easy. How come you met all these famous painters, by the way?”

We ordered another cup of coffee and continued our conversation about art, until I told him I had to go to meet a physiotherapist to see if she could heal my knee.

“Are you continuing the Camino tomorrow?” I asked before I left.

“Yes,” he said, “I have to leave this stone behind.”

Chapter 3: The Bulls' Arena



I stayed another two days in Pamplona to have some more treatment from the physiotherapist. Slowly I started to regain confidence about continuing the Camino. It was clear to me I had to reorganize myself.

I was meandering through the streets of Pamplona and saw the statue of the bulls running through the streets. Ended up at the bulls' arena, I had no idea beforehand it existed. There stood a robust stone bust of Hemingway in front of the arena.

It made me contemplate what Andrea had said the day before. I was thinking about the Ten Oxherding Pictures, a bullfight avant la lettre. I don't remember them well, but in one of the last pictures both ox and man have disappeared. Could this be the abyss of emptiness Andrea was referring to? If so, why be so afraid, since in the end the man returns to the market.



*There are four chambers inside
Three chambers of the mind
And an Empty One wrapping them*

*Or to be more precise
There are three chambers inside,
Emptiness being at the outside*

*Just like the Matryoshka dolls
Were each doll is part of
The Oneness of them all*

If you identify with one of the smaller Matryoshka dolls, you can feel the Emptiness surrounding you. And that makes existential fear close by. If you don't identify with any one of them, Oneness and Freedom remain.

Like Jacob seeing angels climbing up and down the ladder, as he rested his head on a stone in the desert. I decided to pay tribute to him at the crypt of the other Jacob in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

Chapter 4: The Path to Burgos

Two days later I took the Red Bus 53 to Puente la Reina, avoiding the raging blizzard over the hill, giving my knee a final break. First thing I did getting off the bus was to buy a pair of gloves, although by now it was the beginning of April. I found a pleasant albergue where I met my two soulmates.

First there was Jon from Norway, who was walking the Camino for the 12th time. And then there was lovely Gail from Texas, a little bit overweight, but with a strong will to accomplish this challenge. A strange match we were, but we did manage to make it together all the way to Burgos. We walked through the snow, over the hills, through the little villages, through wonderful Logrono, supporting each other every step of the way, celebrating our accomplishments each day.

In Burgos they both tragically had to end their journey. Where my knee restored, their knees collapsed.

*In Puente la Reina by the
Ancient bridge over the river
I met my precious soulmates
From Norway and Texas
Sharing the Spirit of hierbas*

*We walked slowly together
Through the snow and bitter cold
Melting our souls step by step
Into a mutual layer of
Joy and sorrow to Logrono*

*Fellow pilgrims were passing by
Getting together at the albergues
Drinking lovely local red wines
Always asking where, when
And why did you start?*

*As if we were in competition
Instead of a shared mission
Asking inner questions
Like 'What Quest am I on?'
Or 'What am I looking for?'*

*Questions that might
Reveal to the mind
The essence of the Path
The real Mystery
Of mankind*

*Forever I will feel connected
With my dear pilgrim friends
Wounded knees made us part ways*

*No more time left
To take the next steps
On the Camino Francés
Together*

Chapter 5: Easter procession

*A long procession with coloured
Pointed hats hiding their faces
Sinners, from all over the world
Strolling alongside the Cathedral
What was their wrongdoing?*

They passed by in rows of eight. Sinners, with hats coloured black, white, yellow, red, blue, purple and pink. They looked like the Ku-Klux-Klan, but they weren't. Since the procession was almost an hour long, it must have been thousands of people. Only two carriages were pushed along, one with Maria, the other with Jesus. And in between someone carried the Cross. An age-old ritual, giving people the possibility of cleansing their sins.

It goes back all the way to the garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve were not allowed to eat the Forbidden Fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. The Original Sin.

I



Enjoy a refreshing Mango,
such a wonderful juice

Or a bizarre-looking Mangosteen,
with its deep purple shell

Or the red-and-yellow spiky Rambutan,
with its translucent flesh

Or the aromatic Durian,
with its dangerous look

Or the flavourful pineapple,
used in many favourite cocktails

Or the succulent Pomelo,
sour-sweet from pale yellow to red

Enjoy them all, but do it
from The Tree of Knowledge

II



Share some orange coloured oval Papaya,
or eat it as a som tam salad

Have a spoon of delicious Dragon fruit,
the unearthly fruit of a cactus plant

Or some tropical Guava,
with its exotic taste and jelly

Or the waxy meat of Jackfruit,
eaten raw or fried in batter

Eat some Langsat, Longan or Lychee,
excellent thirst quenchers

Or the hard brittle snake fruit,
crack it open and dissolve into its Taste

Enjoy them all, but do it
from The Tree of Knowledge

I walked into the Cathedral to join the Easter celebrations, but discovered there were none. The Cathedral was totally empty because of renovation. It felt unreal, this emptiness. Could it be the same emptiness Andrea was talking about? The Emptiness in which man and ox disappear?

The next day I visited the museum of Human Evolution. There was a very nice exhibition of all the different hominids that lived on earth for 7 million years. The progressive path to Homo Sapiens.

We are still on this path, evolution has not reached its limits yet. A photo finish though, if we make it. Does humanity participate in the procession?

*Carrying the Cross together
Who knows it might help
To lay aside the sorrow
Of being disconnected from
Shared Emptiness and Form*

Chapter 6: The Monastery

*Now I was on my own
The long flat Empty Meseta ahead
Where I took a rest at a Monastery
To contemplate this Emptiness
And heal the blisters on my heels*

By now I was exhausted, somewhere in the middle of the Meseta. I seemed to be the slowest walker, everyone passed me by. I came to a little village with a small monastery. There was just one monk running the whole place, I was the only guest. I secluded myself for three days in a very sober room, or maybe it was four, I don't remember. Not only was I exhausted, I was regularly, spontaneously, struck with intense emotions, up to the point of tears in my eyes.

I wondered how Andrea was doing, but I did not want to contact him.

I looked at his self portrait again, and realised that the walls in his painting were as sober as mine in my little cell. These walls were inspired by Velasquez' painting of the nun Jerónima de la Fuente. I felt the urge to study this painting more closely and noticed there was lots of writing, in Latin, on the top and bottom part of the painting.

On the top part was written:

“BONUM EST PRESTOLARI CUM SILENTIO SALVTARE DEI”

“It is good to await the salvation of God in silence.”

And so it goes, most people only walk the Camino to be able to tick their bucket list. But for those few who do walk for a religious or spiritual purpose, this quote perfectly fits the intention of the Camino, “Walking in silence, awaiting the salvation of God”, I thought.

The perfect background for a self portrait of an artist in existential fear, I would say. Because, let's be clear, what if

salvation doesn't happen, not even on the Camino? Then indeed, when you look into the mirror, you still see this abyss of emptiness. And the fear of falling into it.

As Spinoza would say, there is no such thing as a PERSONAL GOD. There are just man and ox disappearing into The Void, and returning to go to the market.

That means that it is not God's responsibility to save us, but that it is our responsibility to save God:

“BONUM EST SALVTARE DEUM”

This is the direct path to Santiago.

*Hear, hear! Why are only a few whispering
That there exists just One World Citizen?*

Alea iacta est, Jus Gaia est!

*Let's cross this river in our quest
To become real brothers and sisters
On a just, sound and profound planet!*

Chapter 7: The Holy Grail

*Finally, finally I arrived at Leon
With the Holy Grail hidden in
A dark little room without a sign
Maybe one day we no longer
Hide the Light hidden inside*

The deepest secret of the Camino is the joy of drinking the local wines together as pilgrims. I did not drink for many years until I walked through the beautiful hills of the Camino where Rioja grapes are grown, in the valley of the river Oja, the river we also crossed. I had bought and wore a hat too that reflected this feeling.

Somebody along the endless long Meseta told me about the Holy Grail being exhibited in a monastery in Leon. So when I finally arrived there it was my aim to see this Grail. First I visited the magnificent Cathedral, although I had liked the Chicken-Cathedral of the small village of Santo Domingo de la Calzada better. This reminded me of

my mother taking care of her chickens, often not more than one left, walking on her wooden shoes daily to the barn, feeding them and refreshing their water. In this Cathedral they took care of two chickens, as part of a legend which I don't remember.

Another legend, but this time a true one, is that of the student Lord Byron, when he wrote on the question of how Jesus turned water into wine: "The water met its Master, and blushed."

I found the monastery where the Holy Grail was exhibited, entrance was easy, just buying a ticket. I walked through the sober hallways of the monastery, it was a museum by now, from the beginning until the end, but no Holy Grail to be found.

I asked one of the attendants if she could tell me where I could find the Holy Grail, and she took me halfway back through the museum to a little dark room with no sign, no indication at all of its contents. But indeed there it was, displayed in a box of glass, the Holy Grail.



The Holy Grail, which Jesus and the Apostles, including Jacob, used to share the wine at their Last Supper. Water blushing meeting its Master, is it much different from chicken held in a Cathedral?

Water or chicken, they both are part of Christ Consciousness, which is no different than The Emptiness surrounding us. The fourth Matryoshka doll.

So why would the Holy Grail be displayed in a little dark room without any sign? I left the monastery in wonder.

*The Fisher King asks his Knights to shoot
Some Wild Ducks to heal the wounds on his feet.*

*A Mallard to understand who we really are,
A Teal to break the seal,
A Tufted Duck to bring good luck,
A Red Headed Pochard to play gentle guitar,
A Shoveler for a rainbow above the sky,
A Wigeon to persist on the holy Quest,
A Pintail to finally find the Grail,
A Smew to celebrate we can start anew,
A Scaup to empty the smelly swamp,
A Mandarin to sing and spread the message,
A Golden Eye to bring Light that never dims,
A Goose Ende to become eternal friends,
A Carolina to find the right Madonna and
A Red Merganser to keep on Dancing night and day.*

Chapter 8: The Iron Cross

*There were moments along the Way
Where I was supposed to feel a real
Sense of community, sleeping
At a church together, sharing
Our hopes, circles of obliquity*

*Until I came to the place
Of the man with the cancer
Digging holes in his face
And the girl from Hong Kong
Silently carrying her prison time*

*At the highest point, the Iron Cross,
I left our Yellow House and my job behind
I joined a prayer in the open field
For the wellbeing of mankind
The priest sharing Host and Wine*

I brought two stones to leave behind at the Iron Cross. One for my job, one for the Yellow House. I had a hard time letting go of both of them.

I talked about it, quite intimate, at the Albergue owned by the man with holes in his head because of cancer. I decided to stay there a couple of days, to contemplate again. One night we sat around with just a few people, one of them a young student from Hong Kong who had just been in prison for 1.5 years for protesting against the “reforms”. We all put forward the most important thing we had to let go. It was the preparation of the Iron Cross.

I later heard that the owner of the Albergue died not long after and the Albergue was closed.

So when I arrived at the highest point of the Camino, the Iron Cross, I just added my stones to the many already there. Including the one from Andrea, somewhere in this huge pile. I hoped he felt better by now, no longer staring into the abyss of his existential fear.

Shortly after that, I joined a priest with five or six followers praying in the field. The set of rituals were all abracadabra to me, but it felt like a good way to finish this process of letting go. And have a good sip of wine.

*I had a sudden moment of Double Vision in the kitchen,
saw three tumbling refrigerators*

*The Basque cheesecake with a chocolate French topping
turned into Eleven*

*Felt dizzy with loose teeth, surrounded by bead trees
full of Mon strawberries*

*The Parmentier, prepared for a memorable dinner,
drifted like Mercury*

Became a puppet on a string, sleepwalking on Absinthe

*Pots and pans clattering in the background, resonating
arithmetic word whiskers*

*Mung beans started growing rapidly, beyond the
Poppy Lanterns hanging in the willow*

Please guard them carefully!

*Am I an Egyptian, short dark hair, a stranger on the earth,
in the middle of an Echo Mania?*

*An Arlésien, thwarted because of smoking pipe,
running out of Camphor?*

*Do I need lenses to see razor-sharp again?
Or is it just a matter of Right Perception, of Letting Go?*

Of Ulysses, returning home, whispering: "Yes, Argos"

Chapter 9: The Order of the Cornmill

*I read about finding the Sword
After challenges to endure
Fixing a cross, climbing a waterfall
To go beyond your power
To be able to serve the World*

*What is it we should be fighting for
Once we find the Sacred Sword
That distinguishes who we really are
And cuts the Path forwards
Towards a Shared Destiny*

I found the church upon the hill where the Sword could be found. Many candles were burning inside. Sheep at the front door. You're invited to become a member of the Order of the Cornmill, grinding flour for humanity, realizing ever higher Oneness.

The Order has many members, it's our Natural Intelligence. Indeed, humans are welcome too!

*Only those species and organisms survive
who are able to enrich their environment
and the planet Earth as a whole.*

*Neither the Darwinists, nor the smartests,
but those who raise the vitality
and the value of life for us all.*

*That's why termites invest in 'making-green',
mushrooms invest in 'making-rain',
whales invest in 'making-oxygen',
wolves invest in 'making-life',
trees invest in 'making-weather'.*

*Planet Earth with all its geology, biology
and levels of spiraling consciousness,
is just One profound living Being,
driven by this law of Natural Intelligence,
striving for ever higher viable complexity.*

Chapter 10: The Cathedral

*From the Church, where the Sword
Can be found, The Path went all the way
Down to the Cathedral with the Tomb
Where the antique censer swings
Around, drowning us in obliquity*

The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, with in front an impressive square, is the final destination of the direct path of the Camino. Expressing the direct connection for any living organism with Christ Consciousness, or the Emptiness in which Man and Ox disappear and return again.

This means there is no Prophet, Saint or preacher needed or desirable in between. Just like it happened to Jacob in the Old Testament. There is this ladder available to each of us at any moment. But even more specifically when

we are going to sleep, being refreshed through a dive into Emptiness.

The Cathedral was loaded to the top with people, who actually only came to see the antique censer swing and smell the incense. A last distraction from the direct path. The mass was in Spanish, or maybe even Latin, nobody understood it.

When the mass was finally over and most people left the Cathedral, some people stayed behind to visit the tomb of St. Jacob behind the altar. I joined the line and when I came to the crypt, I paid my tribute to Jacob, although his bones were not there.

I understood that the Apostle Jacob, or James the Great, a fisherman, whose bones are kept in the crypt, was part of the Inner Circle of Jesus within the group of Apostles.

So it is likely that Jesus shared his secret teachings of Christ Consciousness, the direct path, with him. There is no

recollection of what James preached, but one thing we know, here we are, walking the Camino, searching for Real Truth.

So I bowed my head and paid tribute to the bones of James the Great too. My first journey was accomplished.

*A simple farmer and fisherman
tilling the land with a donkey and a plow
maintaining the soil with a rake and a hoe
harvesting the wheat with a scythe and a sickle*

*He kept some olive trees too
picking the olives with his bare hands
together with his wife, family and friends
telling them the one and only Truth*

*Those in authority hit him,
all tied up, with a cedar stick
until he died the life of a righteous Martyr
whose Kingdom is still at hand*

Chapter 11: Finisterre

*I had to continue my journey
To the End of the World
Once more, to pick up the
Coquille Saint Jacques
From Finisterre beach*

The progressive path is the longest one, very, very long indeed. It takes a lot of time and patience to walk it. But surprisingly, at the Camino you can walk it easily in four days. Nice and quiet.

This path is the path of the Order of the Cornmill. The path in which all of life, even the elements, are trying, by using our Natural Intelligence, to improve step by step life on Earth and our environment.

The direct path implies we are all part of Emptiness, of Christ Consciousness. The progressive path implies that all

the parts take responsibility to move forwards to an ever higher viable Oneness.

Most species do this unconsciously, it is their Natural Intelligence. Humans on the other hand, need some form of Awakening first before they seem to be able to accept this responsibility. Maybe the Awakening of the direct path.

The reality is, humanity seems to be walking backwards to Finisterre. It could really end in the End of the World. A photo finish seems at hand.

*I once met a man who
walked backwards to Finisterre
with on his back a red rucksack*

*Are you a member of
this Back Feet Family?*



*Or do you strive
for a Shared Destiny?
Just stumble, fall, arise*

*Into Emptiness
and Back to Santiago*

*Who dares to swim in a pool of tears?
Who dares to climb down the ladder
to hear the children scream?*

*Who dares to let it all in
until they are coming after you?
Who dares to roam Dante's Inferno
until all hearts are healed?*

*And if you can't handle it anymore,
your White Blood Cells start to cook,
ask Virgil to stand in for a couple of days,
until you are fully recovered.*

*With all his experience on The Other Side,
we need him here more than ever.*

Chapter 12: The Path to Nowhere

*I saw The Pope stand on the boat,
I took my chance and shouted:
“I am going to walk the Camino.”*

*“Have a good time, My Friend,
but don’t tie your shoelaces.”*

I took the Red Bus 53 back to Santiago, to prepare for the third part of my journey. I was tired of walking so decided to do this part on a bicycle. I walked into a bikeshop, the owner looked at me and said, “You can’t do that!” So I decided to go to another bikeshop, problem solved.

There was no route, there was no guide, there was no app, there was nothing. Just me and my bicycle. Often

walking with my bicycle up the hill, people laughing at me behind my back.

There wasn't even a sign at the door indicating where my hotel was. I slept among labour immigrants.

*I got soaking wet,
hit a pole, fell to the ground,
injured my right hand*

“BONUM EST SALVTARE DEUM”

Notes

1. Productions by the author:

- a. Frontpage: The Camino
- b. Introduction: Photo of the Camino
- c. Chapter 3: Bullfight
- d. Chapter 7: Photo of the Holy Grail of Leon
- e. Chapter 11: Backwards to Finisterre
- f. Backpage 1: Empty Mirror
- g. Backpage 2: Logo

2. Other productions:

- a. Chapter 1: Self Portrait by Andrea Molinari
- b. Chapter 2: Photo of Hemingway
- c. Chapter 3: Back to the market
- d. Chapter 5: The Tree of Knowledge I and II
by Andrea Molinari



Secret Rainmaker
designed yet another wet
Paraplu Ballet



***MOVE FORWARD
TO EVER HIGHER
ONENESS***

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