Emilio Estevez’s 2010 epic cinematic journey “The Way” (http://theway-themovie.com/) unfolds along the panoramic backdrop of el Camino de Santiago — the Way of Saint James — the medieval pilgrimage route across northern Spain to the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela where the remains of the Apostle are interred.

Filmed on location against the gorgeous landscapes of northern Spain, the spiritual journey of American ophthalmologist Thomas Avery (Martin Sheen) begins as he is called from the comforts of his California home to Saint Jean Pied de Port in France to identify the body of his only son Daniel (Emilio Estevez). Avery elects to walk the Camino on behalf of his son, embarking with Daniel’s ashes which he dutifully portions out along the way.

Early on Avery meets a drug-imbibing Dutchman from Amsterdam (Yorick van Wageningen) who has decided to tackle the trek in hopes of losing some weight, and an asthenic chain-smoking Canadian (Deborah Kara Unger) who pledges to give up her cigarettes forever at the feet of Saint James. Together this unlikely threesome encounters a slightly mad Irish traveler (James Nesbitt) who’s come on pilgrimage to confront his writer’s block.

As the journey proceeds, bit by bit each character gradually sheds his (or her) façade. After a drunken confrontational scene, where tactless truth is meted out, relationships are patched up; and the pilgrims begin to understand some things about themselves as well as each other. When Tom Avery’s rucksack is stolen by a young gypsy boy, the doctor nearly becomes undone. The boy’s father discovers the crime and forces his son to return the pack intact with the box of ashes. “Our children carry the good and the bad in all of us,” the father says.

Bonded in friendship, the four finally make it to Santiago de Compostela, where they reverently pay their respects in the cathedral. Afterwards they apply for their final testimonials, citing reasons as to why they elected to make the trek.

In the end they decide to push on to Muxia, where Tom Avery sprinkles the last of his son’s ashes over the ancient weathered rocks washed by the sea. The Irish writer has no words to offer; the woman lights up yet another cigarette; the
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