

The Middle Path, Colorized

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The usual iconography failed me.
My mother thumb-tacked
a cardboard print above my crib;
my age of reason came early.
In the print, older sister leads baby brother.
Behind them, the angel, blond and beatific,
wingless, through the pink of cotton candy.
I wanted to scream: "*Don't walk over that bridge!*"
Angel or not—the plank is rotten,
the support ropes frayed. I know
rickety construction when I see it.

To explain what is real, Buddha Shakyamuni gives
thirty-four negatives: "*. . . his body neither existing
nor not existing,
neither blue nor yellow, neither red nor white,
neither crimson nor purple, . . .*"
That just won't do.
I grew up with 64 Crayolas.

The Middle Path is not the Yellow Brick Road.
It winds, curved as meditation,
a worldview eschewing
the red of blood-torture and hell-fire,
the effrontery of Royal Purple,
simple as a sand mandala.

Above the path, indigo vast as mountain vistas,
hills roll plankton green as oceans,
sky shades bald-blue as infinity.
I can curl my toes into the golden buttered crumb
of it, release a held breath, and rest.