

## The Path

“Do not follow in the footsteps of the Ancients; seek what they sought.”

—Matsuo Basho

Once there was a man who, seeing an open field of grass, decided to run across it. Taking off his shoes he leapt and danced across the green pasture, feeling the blades of grass press against his bare feet.

Another, seeing how happy the man was, decided to follow him. He removed his shoes and frolicked behind the man, carefully keeping to the exact same route as his predecessor.

Soon others began to sprint after them. In a very short time the constant pounding of feet wore a path across the field. The dirt beneath was trampled hard. The crowds increased to the point that it was no longer possible to run. The people trudged in a dreary line, one behind the other.

No one knew where the path went, but it was rumored to lead to paradise. Before long it became an obligation for people to travel the path. Mothers pulled their unwilling children behind them. The old and infirm were carried on pallets by young men. Most people walked on their own straight ahead, not looking out at the field but down at their own feet. The journey had become a burden to bear. All that mattered was the goal.

Rules were posted to make sure that everyone stayed on the path. The aimless treading of feet could not be permitted to spoil the beauty of the verdant grass. In time fences were built on either side of the path to prevent anyone from straying from the one true path to the meadows beyond the wrought iron bars. Then the wrought iron bars were replaced with solid concrete walls to make sure that no one could see the grass on the other side.

Guards with machine guns were posted at intervals in turrets above the walls. It was a mystery why anyone would want to climb one of the walls and run across the grassy field, but if someone tried, the guards would shoot them. A few people tried.

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