# Boy at Trailhead

A little boy stands with his back to us at the water's edge, facing a path of stepping stones, such that his next step would be on the first stone. He is looking back, over his shoulder, all alone in the picture. But the picture is not all that wide; he could be looking at his parents, off the page. And they could be just a few feet away. We don't know.

But we assume so. We can't help it. What else could he be looking at?

The water is a narrow creek. If we split the canvas in thirds each way, a three by three array of nine rectangles, the creek begins at the bottom left corner of the middle rectangle and runs diagonally upwards and to the right, disappearing at the top right corner of that same middle rectangle, under tree branches that extend over the creek on either side. The stones run down the creek, one after the other, like teeth. Or piano keys. Dominoes. A shark-tooth necklace laid out flat and straight. All gray and roughly rectangular, very obviously man-made. The creek itself might also be man-made. There is grass and a few small plants on either side, and then the line of trees begins, and the creek disappears into it. The leaves on the left are light green and forest green. The leaves coming from the right side of the creek are orange, yellow, brown. The sky above is a light bluish gray.

The boy is Asian: short black hair. He's wearing a light blue down vest, hooded with the hood down. A long white sleeve coming out the left side of his vest. (He's turned slightly to the left, looking over his left shoulder, such that we do not see his right sleeve). Left fist clenched by his side. We wonder what he's thinking. Does he want his parents to watch him? Or follow him? Carry him across? Or is he looking back for the opposite reason, to make sure he isn't being watched?

This stepping stone path that continues into the woods, further than

we can see, is, needless to say, not the type of walking path that you see every day. There's no real element of danger; if you take a wrong step, into the creek, maybe your shoe gets wet. That's it. It's that shallow. But still, one must think before he walks down it. Even adults. To walk one foot, one step, per stone? Right. Left. Right. Left. Right. Left. Or to walk one, two feet per stone? Right and left. Right and left. Right and left. One must focus. One must always watch their step. Even adults. And should you encounter another person on the path, walking in your direction, how will you react? How will you share the path? A mild challenge, even for adults.

But for the little boy, this could be his greatest challenge yet.