

The Imaginary Road

Jackie Kay



The Imaginary Road was co-commissioned by Manchester Literature Festival and Manchester Jazz Festival and performed by Jackie Kay as part of Manchester Jazz Festival at the RNCM in July 2014 and again at Matt & Phreds Jazz Club on 19th October 2014 as part of Manchester Literature Festival. The poem was performed together with original music composed by Adam Fairhall.

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THE IMAGINARY ROAD

If you can picture yourself on the road
The one that exists in your mind
If you can walk those steps again
You'll be surprised at what you find.

The road that was in your head
Has already found you walking:
When you looked ahead,
It was your footsteps waiting.

Then you heard the song of the road,
Under the dirt and the dust,
Heard the song of the Delta blue
And found a song you already knew.

You were humming it.
It went like this.

There are roads there in the beginning;
Roads that take us to the end.
Roads that we can't help loving -
The dips, turns and bends.

Whether it is gravel or old stone
A dust track, dirt or blues
Your life travels the roads
- the familiar and the strange.

There's something about you now -
Small figure walking the track,
Growing into the distance
Avoiding the dips and the cracks,

Trying not to look back.
The road that was in your head
The road that was in your head
Is already up ahead.

The road that was your friend
Will be waiting in the end.
It will hold out a helping hand
As you draw your line in the sand.