

Roomful of Teeth

The Ascendant

Wally Gunn





The Ascendant

by **Wally Gunn**

poems by **Maria Zajkowski**

performed by **Roomful of Teeth**

1. The beginning and
2. The fence is gone
3. Through the night wave
4. What we began
5. Are we death
6. Surviving death

The beginning and

by the last tree in the last summer
on the hill where the last sun falls
on the things that at last mean

we are finally unwound
from the hollow arrow
around which we have spun
our ignorant lives

we leave the first last
to wait inside the darkness
where the black snow falls
like the last bird

The fence is gone

The fence is gone,
we are starting to see
our nudity through the branches,
the pumping berries
pinned to our hearts,

I've forgotten if you are me
or I'm you.
We switched bags somewhere.
I have to rummage through
the palings in the yard
for the knothole that used to
show me how to see the world.

I can't frame you in it now
or detect from these piles
of decrepit fence what was
so important that for so long
it needed to be kept in.

Through the night wave

a hand becomes every hand
a hole becomes a home
a place to forget
the ascendant has left
a face in the dark
is what it faces
the glass forest
in all of your lives
the rope around
day and night
into death I am
repeating the unsayable

What we began

when we began we began
I sent myself back but we never
did look into that cloud

there is too much desire to forget
what a waste we can and can't be

tonight apart looks like
what won't be itself in the light

Are we death

are we death now
can we hope at last
that this blue morning has become us
finally is there nothing to believe
coming after us
placing its steps in ours through the dew
free of the urging heart
free of the curse of hair and eyes
are we at last on the mountain
we have so long been under
the tunnel that was a song
is it over
the irritability of being ourselves
the plain fact of being dumb
are we at last over it
can we now be final
final like memory
final like stars
final like mornings
all over again

Surviving death

Every day, surviving death, we send out our horses.
They don't come back.

Here the dry river's a place not to camp,
the night a place not to be.

An army gathers rattling its pans, thinking of home,
an army that will turn your head

to a fire in the sand where those
who've survived this wait out of time

in the dust and the gold,
with the horse you thought was gone.



Producer: *Jesse Lewis*

Recording Engineers: *Rich Lamb, Max Ross and Tom Kennedy*

Mastering Engineer: *Randall L. Squires*

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Roomful of Teeth:

Brad Wells, artistic director

Estelí Gomez, soprano

Martha Cluver, soprano

Caroline Shaw, alto

Virginia Warnken Kelsey, alto

Eric Dudley, tenor

Avery Griffin, baritone

Dashon Burton, bass-baritone

Cameron Beauchamp, bass

Jason Treuting, drums

Sunny Cyr, ensemble manager

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