When Angels Slept On Steel

by David Groulx

When Angels Slept on Steel
by David Groulx
ISBN
online edition 2020
1st edition 2020, 100 copies

all rights remain with the author
Layout by Priscilla Brett

© grey borders books 2020
greyborders.com

Table of Contents

The Angel that Slept on Steel	5
The Angel that Woke	16
The Angel Of deoch an doris	24
An Angel of the Twisting	27
An Angel Wither And A Narrow Sonofabitch	28
Angel of the Black Eschars	30
An Angel of the Monnet	31
Angel of Grenades	33
Two Poems About Becoming Another Being	34
Seeing the Angel of Beatings and the Beaten	35
The Angel of the Fish in My Belly	36
Biography	41

The Angel That Slept On Steel

Yes dreams are good to have until the world takes them and crushes them into so many little shards you cant' even use them to slit you own wrists.

and yet you hang on to them
those little shards
like someone who hangs on to tuberculosis

what the hell's wrong with you?

I took all the furniture you left behind
burned it
drank beer
and got drunk on the ashes

My land lord is a lazy fuck
he says he'll do something and doesn't
lazy fuck

My boss doesn't even know I'm alive
which is good cause I wish he were dead

There was a rat in the cupboard
I spayed him with sunlight
now he smells nice

My nieghbour sits at home and
collects welfare and gossips
I hate gossip, but I guess it pays well

The guy downstairs is slapping his girlfriend around again
I hear her screaming
Somebody help me! Somebody please fucking help me!
So I go through their door and he stops
She goes back a few days later

The other nieghbour is having a Christian prayer party
in his apartment
I drink beer alone, the singing
ain't bad

When tragedy becomes popular, everyone wants to be a part of it in some sad way.

There is a guy on the transit
he's gotta be over 300lbs
his scooter straining under his weight
his belly hair sticking out from beneath his shirt
which reads Goodlife Fitness
I'm baffled

Instead of equality we settled for sameness.

Didn't win battle of the bards
and came home to
stomach flu
Now I got poetry coming out of both ends
Flush flush...flush-
flush...

I kept waiting for the road to move but it was me.

Lets finish the last of the Pernod
drink these memories and pass out
next to the walls we have built

The day I met you
the sun shone a little brighter
the moon hung a little closer to the earth
then it does now

flowers smelled sweeter
sky was more blue
grass greener
the nights not so dark at all
and the mornings too early

There are two hounds
one who's belly is always full
and the other

The guy upstairs is a miserable pick
he chews his rage like a cow its cud
and if he dropped
dead I don't think anyone would care

I hate Monday mornings
because Monday mornings mean failure

There is a hooker on my street and she asks if I want a blow job before work
She promises to be clean, quick and discreet and to finish the old fashioned way. I love old fashioned girls

I'm walking down Montreal road To have a beer and there's a guy punching himself in the face. *Man he's really giving himself a beating. I wouldn't want to be him.*

I live for the moment and its just that moment I feel alive and I'm only 30 seconds away from it.

The rat is still here and I have begun to call him ghost rat, a legend of Vanier.

I just want to put a little knife it
baby
just a little more

My poetry is as accessible to you as my land was to your grandparents.

The best thing about my home town was the road out of it

my best memory of my home town was leaving it.

Now we've razed the sadness from our coupes but cannot remove it from memory.
wear them down till they become bone.

Law of motion.
who are rich tend to stay rich, those that are poor tend to stay poor.

We no longer take promises
You and I we've grown old
too old for that
We let promises blow away like autumn leaves
like trash in the street
It is hope in a new breathe
and our last breathe
that we still believe

I will hold you till the darkness has ended
though winter grows old in your bones
until my life feels like the sun bursting

You can talk to anyone as long as you understand that most people like to listen to themselves.

Every man thinks he is invincible
every man is certain his beliefs are correct
this is the cause of conflict

The only difference between you and me is the amount of gold on the casket.

Here there are no answers, but the is meaning.

If you want to know what a barroom taste like
kiss me.

The woman in this neighbourhood are mostly white and fat and all the children are
half black
this is what poverty looks like
domestic
half white

You wouldn't come down this way
you may drive by it on your way to someplace better
than this.

I am thinking the state wants me to feed it, with whatever mash its turned my brain into.

I can only walk now with Lou Reed's songs and my hands holding it's loneliness. that time can be measured by shades of light and in this we give the most attention to some other's holocausts, this way we don't have to look at our own.

I think my poetry is killing me
You know I smoke a lot when I write
same when I drink
You once said I should quit smoking
that the world needed to hear me
Like I need to hear you now
There were so many things I wanted to say to you
Well, not really, I just wanted to say one thing
I guess there really is no point now,
is there?

My martyrdom is hidden in the mud, saved there and walked through
I am bound to it
by it I am lashed to the land
a hook, barbed
It cannot be taken out of me

Capitalism has created a man who has become a defect of nature, a parasite of the earth.
War has become a commodity.
In capitalism man has created his own predator.

Life is marked by a sequence of catastrophes
with order
the earth has its own order
its own history
a meaning
we cannot understand

One time stones and trees had power, then someone made them into money
now their power has become twisted,
deformed.

For a man, his only
gift to his family
is his labour.

Poetry is the way I chose to help heal the universe.
I am a scar on Canada
I am a non-union poet.

What kind of person do you have to be
to fall in love? What if all you know is sacrifice, can
anyone fall in love
with someone like that?
When I was a child they said I enjoyed my own company too much
Was it wrong?
Marching to the beat of my own drummer
my own creation
They said I hardly ever spoke as a child
so much noise already in my head
They put me in special education
failed me
Could you love someone like that
all those warmer summers
ago?

God was two lambs
there were two lambs
one was lost to the valley
one was lost to the city
one was lost to the fire
That was god.

Where the hands of time grasp our memories
and the dust slips through our fingers.

We have written our stories on the
rocks
That the rocks may know us
as their grandchildren

My life rises in the east and falls in the west.

These years lay broken against the north of my soul.

I've had guns pointed at me twice in my life, both times by the cops.
The first time I felt the barrel pushing against the back of my head,

I still ran. The second time pointed at my chest, funny thing is I was not afraid, I just wanted to feel something.

My friend Matthew died in a hotel room in Barrie
from an overdose of cocaine
My friend Mark hung himself in his basement in Edmonton
My friend Luke choked to death on his vomit after a night of drinking
My friend John blew his brains out in his shed
My friend Peter froze to death after being chased by the cops,
lots of questions there.
There were prayers I suppose
Food, cigarettes, and booze into the fire, but
mostly there have been deaths and I've changed the names, there
have been deaths, but these were my friends
and none of them were older than I am now
when I take to the brandy and I take a slumber
I remember them.

Heaven was invented by a guy who would never go there to
make poor people feel better about poverty

God was created/invented by a man with a small penis.

Universities are the original bastions of unoriginal thought.

The state only lives in our imagination, that's where real power comes from,

The purity of virginity was again invented by a man with a small penis.

Why do men wash there hands after pissing?
A cock is probably the cleanest part of his body, the hands probably the dirtiest. You should wash your hands before you touch your cock
or just stop pissing on them.

People who ride bikes think that people who drive cars are arseholes
People who drives cars think that people who rides bikes are arseholes
There are all arseholes.

The difference between the rich and the poor is that the poor know it
the rich are oblivious.
but I have seen the living and the dead and to me, there is no difference.

Prayer was God's gift to the poor
Gold, his gift to the rich.

The house I spent my childhood in was torn down like my childhood.

I tried to avoid it, turns out it was unavoidable.

writing poetry does not get easier as you get older, it gets harder
time begins to disappear, you become humane with words and hate yourself for getting old

We are like German Shepherds
we are intelligent enough to obey orders
and the Master tells us
we are intelligent
and we think we are
obey orders

Canadians are fine with reconciliation
as long as they don't have to do anything
as long as it doesn't inconvenience them
as long as Indians stay out of their neighbourhoods

The sound of my voice is the sound of the earth
the colour of my skin is the colour of the land
I belong here.

I find myself drinking
beside the ditch
where you left our kisses

my mouth
a lonely distance to you

I am one of twenty
I know a history of you
where you call down this darkness
I remember the space
without you here
I know what you cannot believe

I am one of twenty
a sip a touch a flash

love is the only proof we have
that we are not alone.

They say if you drink alone
you're an alcoholic
so here's to you and to us
looking in the mirror

I dreamed someone was drinking my wine last night
St. Jude, *the patron saint of lost causes.*
and letters to Ziggy Stardust
that sleeping train
caught birds with one eye

"And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Isaiah 33-24

Sometimes when I'm half asleep I can smell bear grease.
Combed short hair of the moon, the earth breathing
watch the castrated embers
seeping hard into the concrete
blood, piss and the echoes of a gun shot.

I am rising on low wings.

I was Apollo
who built this song
dreamed the world
and washed your body in the music

I commit this love
to the clouds in a glass of absinthe
where I keep the last kiss from my father
and my first broken heart

lumber through this pilgrimage
this fomenting ritual

Every time we made love I heard you say, "I felt some of my life leave me, bring me to your darkness, where there are two dogs".

The Angel That Woke

I

I am pushing into you and the water washing over us like a new rain.
And outside the door life goes on, this place of dying, the living hate,
especially me, this place that struggles to make order of death.

I take the things I've brought from home
the shampoo, conditioner, soap, let the water fall over you
these small moments are Lucullan for us
a sadness that becomes wet

"The door is locked, baby"
your mouth whispers that prayer
that was never wrote
"The world disappears when I'm with you, baby"
begin with my fingers touch with your lips
your tongue witching my body
there is only us
now

And we go from that moment
a flicker of hunger
stroked all the way to the lyric of lust
that shines on the verge

I comb your hair
long straight and curls over your breast
help you with your hospital gown
outside the nurses the patients
utter in broken voices like echoes
through a frost in a graveyard

II

Now alone in this bed
I miss your kisses the most
lightly on my back
asking
You are confined to your chair
the prison your body has become
has ordered us to sleep alone
I miss you beside me
the punishment unbearable
the sentence unbreakable
the nights are vicious
feasts on us and masticates all of my sleep
I can hear it chewing us apart
and I miss you beside me
your kisses the most

III

This is when we began dying and this is also
when you promised you wouldn't and
I believed you
and the light of your words wrapped around me
like a child rapt in wonder
I believed it
when you said you didn't want to free
I believed in your kisses and your urges
I believed in your prayers of evasion
and the master plan
I believed in your war and not your peace
My devotion to your coiled snake
I was faithful to your desolation
I embraced your invidious mordancy
for a life of Sundays I sat in my pew leaning on the
future that never happened

There are four canes/one for the angel of low taste/one for the angel that staggers/one for the angel of the raised eyebrow/one for the angel of maigre days.

IV

Your fauvist heart, you brought to me by a restless iron mantle
and your coronations became a coronach
and fantasies of war
mania and blessed our battles with our tongues

My heart was a rampage for you
like Hector charging into the Argives, We both
knew this rattle snake heart was meant for ruin
that shone in your words
that glistened in your whispers
that was lambent in your prayers
your bony kisses are milk and honey
that pale, miserable hound and ashen snow gathered around us.

V

Your garrotting my Apician and boisterous heart, like a deity
I make libations to in the dawn of days.
Who is the god of these devoted highways that
always lead me back to you?
Canonize me, bring me my grace, faithful to your
marcescence
I am sincere to you as a mouse to cat
I hold you in my mouth
our joy is deep and heavy.

VI

I watch as your body becomes your truculent prison
here my canorous and hollow vessels
breaking one by one
complete in our incompleteness
our lives flayed from their bones
parts of me become hard

take your hand from your mouth
quivering like a rabbit no one will hear you
divagate to the early flutter
I rove over your body
with my tongue
an echo of a swallow of every drop of you
the pleasure of long luciferous kisses

I am crashing to you
largo legato crescendo

VII

My love is frost howling and my fields are gaunt from a
winter that stumbled and begged to leave
what was born in spring was wiped away
the murky winter light against the snow
my words your words our words
stiff and cold on our tongues
a thin malice thawing

VIII

Say yes to this night
yes to the music
yes to the brandy
say yes to the cigarette smoke
say yes to that ache
that time cannot consume

Say yes to this
blood this hair this body
yes to the deep blue,
sew this hollow abyss

we pull mandragora roots
and dance as one to the noise they make
we gather stones to rebuild the walls of a
strong city
we drink
we go by moonlight
our steps
coiled together
larghetto

The Angel Of *deoch an doris*

I read what is broken
I recognize what is wounded

I've out lived most of my friends
witness to the number of lives we'd lived
I guess that's good enough

I've seen the useless grow old
and become more useless

On their fiftieth
wedding anniversary
she prattled on about her achievement
while he kept his mouth shut
as he had for the past fifty years
not wanting to spoil the occasion

Multiculturalism
is a fragmentation of society
to the benefit of the state
that it may eat

the Victorians
invent segregation

we are no longer defined by what we produce, but
what we consume

It was God who broke Lazarus
When he was a child
he wanted to become
an Indian leg farmer

and he could go as
Foucault to the wind

he didn't though
he just became an Indian leg farmer

As for Indians being nomadic, White
people travelled here?

Poetry is raw meat
for the most primitive parts
of the soul
You've made me into cat
that kissed you while you slept
and
the highway is full of cats that couldn't count
and then I spoke to the saints
and then to the beasts
meow

I am late for the bus
to school
I stop running
I don't want to be stopped by the police
for running

This is the way it is for Indians
in Canada
Note on the fridge door

I keep my lung in the freezer
in a zip lock bag
Marked lung
I want it burned with me when I die
Please don't forget it
P.S Please take it out of the bag.

I almost killed a man once
I wanted to touch him with a bullet
the rifle was loaded and everyone was drunk
but someone pulled the gun from of my hands

before I could change life
I followed the thunder in those days
chased it till I was empty
and now when I close my eyes
all I see are the flashes
of a distant lightning

I was recently asked to sit on a jury
to judge books
not written by
Indians
I was not asked to sit on
Gerald Stanley's or
Raymond Cormier's
jury
because they were accused of
killing Indians
Like the stars aching through the darkness
the settles are narrowed by the names given to the living

Its twice this month I've taken a plane from Ottawa to Toronto
and twice I've been pulled out of line for a "random security check"
I'm beginning to think these things are not so "random".

I owned a 9 mm pistol once
and thought about killing someone
I traded it for two ounces of Lebanese red
because it was hotter than the steam pipes of hell
I got stoned on the hash and thought about
loving something else

I've built you a tempestuous edge
and songs about plutonium bombs
our living is only believing we exist
to guide each others shadows
through the flash

An Angel of the Twisting

I tried to hang myself once
it was new years eve in a hotel room
I tore the electrical cord fro the TV and tied around a
shower nozzle in the tub
I didn't want to make a mess someone else had to clean up
I let my naked body slide down the wall of the tub
feeling myself being suffocated ah no more pain no more laughter
no more anything
and then the fucking nozzle broke off
I wanted to die
Happy new year!

An Angel Wither And A Narrow Sonofabitch

I down my last two beers from my duffel bag
I'm leaving my home town again
I cant handle this relationship anymore
it cripples me
its too narrow
and I sever it with my thumb
and my fist

I hitch hike to the next city
and have a couple of beer at the bus depot
staving off a vicious hangover
I get back on the road and in the next city
I stop in at the Empire hotel
and have 3 scotch and a beer
and on the road again
a guy stops I get in
its a beater car, but the guy has a couple of mickeys
we drink we talk he lets me off in the next town

its dark now
everything is closed
all the booze is gone
and the hangover that's been stalking me
the one I've tried to stay ahead of is roaring down on me
A car stops, it a French couple
all I can understand is "Montreal"
oui I say
My hangover holds down me in the back seat
darkness
I'm sweating and freezing at the same time
I see wonted shadows of rats and spiders mostly and others
I cant make out
all I can feel is I'm gonna die here
and no one will know where I'm going

or where I came from
or what was haunting me
or what I was running from
another dead Indian
died of the drink
rats and spiders crawling, rats and spiders crawling
and other things I cant make out.
Goodbye you narrow sonofabitch!

To the angel that slept under the loading dock behind the beer store in an orange shag rug and shared all of her beer with all the passersby who were on there way to the fields that led to the old Canadian National and the Nash before Afghanistan before Bosnia and Libya and Iraq changed our world and everything we though we knew about it.

There are people I wish would drop
fucking dead
people I've thought about killing
probably too many
too many people too many times

The guy who cut me off
with the Baby on board sign
and that guy with the dream catcher
hanging off the rear view mirror
and that old lady counting out her nickels
at the cashier in front off me
a couple on nieghbours
and the guy whining about his parking space at Wal-Mart
and ...
you get it.

Angel of the Black Eschars

I met a beautiful woman
who had been raped
at I party I forgot to leave
Her abuser passed out in a room above
she came down the stairs
and began crying in my beer
Her tears were yellow
I could not take them out
so I drank them bitter and warm

Her face was painted in the mourning
of war and I smoked
cigarette after cigarette
and set her words in the smoke
for whatever song I could give her
and took her away from that place
it was all I could do.

The midnight grows merciful to us
and I drift in and out of moonlit comas

An Angel of the Monnet

This place is scheduled for
destruction soon
You see all places are
in this place
Well... you found it late in the light
but its not too late in enjoy it's last luciferous shimmer
flaying that will soon
be extinct
No, no there will not be any pictures
they are not allowed at this stage and there
is no time for that anyway
You see I had waited for you, nursing my beer and sipping my drinks
I'm glad I did
cause now we can see the end
together
alone I must go
watch the tracers my dear
they're not pretty but they do
shine like neon across the world

Like Babylonian king lonely on his stump
in a cage made of red
I keep your memories from falling
into the waters of Lethe

The bees had thunder
in those days and the
birds had horns
the honey I made
was of flower's vibration on the tongue
& the beginning of a raindrop

Do not forget me
my love
I'll be here
drinking the last of the Monnet

A belief in a relationship with God
is a belief in violence
this is an illusion

that salvation comes
through domination
and not knowing
this is an illusion
like they have the faith
like they have a remedy for death

_____

I was like a dog dancing
to a song the cats played
I love you
like a fog rising in
night

Angel of Grenades

I had a lover once
she slept in the backseat of my
car
while I drove around the city
looking for someone I could never find
she carried hand grenades in her pocket
Just in case she said

The truth is I wanted her the fuck out of my car
I couldn't follow her dreams
There was too much mileage on them anyways
but she had those fuckin hand grenades
and she knew where all the bootleggers lived
and kept me from my illusions

———————

We cannot live in our unconscious
We cannot live in our memories
We must always be grasping the mystery
that is life
that is everything

Two Poems About Becoming Another Being

Look at me!
I am becoming a bird
a winter bird
come
Not because we desire it but
because it is necessary
to become a bird

The land was easier to travel back
then
And there was no longer singing back
then
You see that was the time I wore deer
antlers
and now it sometimes feels to me
when my head is heavy
that I was in some other beings
dream
There arsehole nieghbour from upstairs
is chasing the gay guy downstairs because
the music is too loud
its probably not because the music's too loud
but that it's disco

Seeing the Angel of Beatings and the Beaten

I saw this boy I used to go to school with
living on the streets of Toronto
while I was visiting there
I wanted to say hello give him a few dollars
but I didn't
I didn't want to embarrass him
I remembered that we learned how to smoke dope together
remembered how he loved hockey
it was grade six I think
I remembered that he looked like his mother
a small beautiful red headed woman
I remembered that his stepfather would beat him for the smallest wrong
I remembered the bruises
I remembered him telling me that he'd run away one day
I guess he did
and all these years later
I watch him disappear into the street
carrying his stepfather in a knapsack

We should write beautiful things on paper
because trees always wanted to be beautiful
and the laws we write down should be good laws
in honour of them

Why do we call men who carry guns peace keepers?

The Angel of the Fish in My Belly

The angel that wanted to hold every sad thing in the world in her arms
The angel that never wanted to stop rain and a song from the Broken
Bones couldn't save you
The angel who got drunk with the poets in the city
The angel of the fish in my belly
who left her prints and her shadows
on every wall in my house
the angel that took all the guns from my hands and left the memory of
the violence of it all to haunt me
The angel of every broken grace
the one that held me down in the spit of the serpents mouth
till I could almost taste the eponyms of
the rivers
that was struck by the ptisan bands of lightening
The angel of the overdose and the fissure
leaving what is left behind buried
The angel who tied me up with her lips
who showed me what it was like to live
with only one horn

Dear brother did you bring the baby
some peanut butter
his belly is aching and empty
and mother & father are gone

Dear brother the government's coming
coming to take us away
from each other and
I hate to see you beaten down with a paddle
for tell'n them to go fuck themselves
which is exactly what they should do

Dear brother I need to tell you, none of this is your fault
you are only five years older than me
I don't need to forgive you Dear Brother
but I need you to forgive yourself
and
I want to thank you

My brother who could swim like a fish
from your brother who could run like a deer
Megwetch

There is a fire burning across
the street, I am listening to the Grateful
Dead, because sometimes music is more
important than fire

Angel of the soldier's eyeball
Angel of tenebrous candles
Angel of what the cat dragged in
and this restless thin
life has made me
Angel of the painted days
wonder back to me
meander this way again
grace this empty place again
stop me from feeling like midnight
all the time
Angel of being alone
Angel of all the broken stars
listen,
I knew two guys once, boys
who divided themselves from their memories
by falling beneath the wheels
of eighteen wheelers on highway 17
I went to their funerals
we were only boys
and we saw there

Angel of scarred wrists
Angel of playing in the rain
and my loneliness
Angel of phones that don't ring
Angel of birds that don't sing
tomorrow is always calling
an angel of broken hope
Angel of the sadness of the world
listen,

I had a friend once who froze to death
on a lake in Northern Ontario
the cops left him there for dead
and his brother found his bruised body
there three days later
We knew the cops were involved
but, nothing ever came of it
because the cops were white and we
we just Indians
Angel of injustice and the light that falls
of the skin that is fallen and the tears that I think
bring me the wind
and requite it
for this spoon of bitterness
for St. Anne, St. Remy
and all the dammed saints and
all children I knew
that are now dead.

Whisper into you folded hands to the
Angel of the rough-looking
been had
and hungry and
the seasons that fall on
a broken masterpiece
and the sins I've been faithful to
and the hour, that hour
when I should be forgiven and forgotten
My mind drifts away to days that have fallen away from me

The end is always deep
and most men drown
in six inches of water

Till you ended up in places
you didn't want to be
with people you didn't want to be with

because they were like you
just holding your head above the water

hang the mirror now my love
I am ready to look at it
and it looks back at me
echo apostasy
rattles the rein
soughing
rouses me to wake

Life was made for uncommon drunks like us
and now the days have blown away like leaves in autumn storms
bring me you firelight
the thunder is moving away from us now
kiss me
this body is a river
through me to you
a distance only water can measure
Like a moth I swim the light around you
till it goes out
or I do?

I am here in the St. Louie
listen to Lou Reed scratch his guitar
watching the girls dance
heaving on the notes
and dragging whatever drink they have across the tables
the poets of Virgo are outside, swaying to 97% of the moonlight

David Groulx was raised in Ontario, Canada. He is proud of his aboriginal roots, Anishnabe and French Canadian. He has published eleven books of poetry. His book, *The Wabigoon River Poems* was nominated for the Archibald Lampman award in 2015. His poetry has been translated into French, Ojibwa and Cree languages.

His poetry has appeared in over 180 magazines across 15 countries.