ALL POEMS
WRITTEN BY
HAMZA POOL
FOR THE FILM

"BETTER DAYS"
(MANUSCRIPT)

For Reckz,

Miss ye big man,

Gone but not forgotten.

The Ceiling

There's a crack in the ceiling
I trace with my stare.
Rumination's and prayers,
As I breathe so heavy.

The light flickers slow,
Like it's missing a step.
I'm half-dreaming of death,
As my head gets sweaty.

So I lie awake,
Wait for a sign,
To show me I'm not
Better off gone.

That's how long I've waited,
Barely sitting still,
Depressed against will,
Humdrum and dumb.

That's how long I've drifted
Through ceilings of white,
No day, no night,
Just rum making me numb.

That's how long the knot's
Been in my chest,
Like something repressed,
Just waiting to collapse.

I sink through the mattress,
Eventually fall,
Don't answer their calls,
Though the phone's in my lap.

There's a rhythm that builds
In the breath of the air,
A weight I can't bear,
But I wear it like covers.

My thoughts freeze
When I try to speak,
I always sound bleak,
So I don't speak to others.

I just lie awake,
Wait for a sign,
To show me I'm not
Better off gone.

That's how long I've lingered
Beneath the hush,
Bones feel like dust
And my head's always aching.

That's how long the ceiling
Hasn't replied
To my pleas, my cries,
And my constant self-shaming.

That's how long the ceiling's
Kept my thoughts,
Each one that I fought,
Each night I nearly parted.

I never once moved,
But I travelled for years,
Through hatred, fears,
And ambitions half-hearted.

If there's a God,
It's the one on my wall,
Watching it all,
Just fiending for a prayer.

But not wanting to help,
Just waiting for praise.
Even when He stays,
He just looks down and stares.

As I lied awake,
He never gave me a sign,
To show me I'm not
Better off gone.

That's how long I've waited
To heal,
Or for sleep to rebuild
The body I broke.

That's how long I've gone
Through the steps,
And rehearsed my own death,
But I'm scared of the rope.

That's how long my skin
Feels the crawl,
As I stare at the wall,
Too tired to escape.

I know the way out,
But I don't want to fight,
I'd rather be blind,
And leave it to fate.

Hands That Slip

Dirty shirts and rubber gloves.
Ripped-up FILAs, kicking up dust.
Screams in the yard, lips getting' bust.
One bad move, one wrong shove.

Bent in the sun, squinting too long.
Someone said sorry, somebody's gone.
Mum come out yelling from behind the door.
Crack in the back, wrestle on the floor.

Feel like a pussy, it was just a game.
I don't want people to see I'm in pain.
So I pull up my sleeves, zip up my coat.
Smile through my teeth that tightens my throat.

Choked on the words, swallowed them whole.
Blamed it on nothing, blamed it on the cold.
Towels on hooks, fists on the walls.
Bleeding through socks, limping through halls.

One small cut, nobody sees.
Picking my nails, biting my sleeve.
Back bruised up, cracked from the fight.
Ear looking swollen, ringing all night.

Hands slipping, grasping for air.
Tryna hold on, but no one's there.
Fingers breaking, trying to pull.
Can't feel your grasp, 'cuz my hand's full.

Skin torn open, veins in my palms.
Gripping too hard, but nothing calms.
Each fall, each shout, another tear.
Can't stitch the fabric of what's not there.

Hands that once held, now push away.
The more I reach, the more they sway.
A friendship broken, the love is dead.
Fingers twitching, words unsaid.

Feel like a pussy, it was just a game.
I don't want people to see I'm in pain.
So I pull my sleeves, zip up my coat.
Smile through my teeth that tightens my throat.

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Player-1

It was quiet out in Turnham Green,
Just the sound of trains and cars.
And I was lying on the carpet floor,
Control battered and scarred.
Me and Adam fighting over
Who got first on the avatars,
Then making peace with Crash Bandicoot.

See, he was only a year younger,
So he was close enough to match.
As such, I never played the older role,
Not once did I dispatch
Any kind of wisdom.
I never let him win a match.
So when he cried, I just passed the pad.

Still, he had the kind of laughter
That filled up every space,
While I'd retreat to Film4
And vanish without trace.
He had his friends, his jokes,
His world of warm embrace.
I had the blue screen in my chest.

He says I always pushed him,
Says I'm part of why he tries.
But he don't know I'm stagnant now,
Just feeding him these lies.
After quitting my job,
When I wake, I barely rise.
I just scribble down my dreams, then throw 'em away.

See, if he weren't my brother,
He'd be my best friend.
The one I text at 2 a.m.,
The one I don't pretend.
Anyone else would've left,
But him, I can depend.
And still, I keep the worst from him.

I should have told him years ago,
We're broken in the same way.
That sometimes life feels pointless,
Like it's rigged to slip away.
But we were raised to bite it down
And take it to the grave,
So I just smiled and changed the tone.

Because in my family, pain's a punchline
Or it's whispered with such shame.
We only speak of struggle
If there's someone else to blame.
If tears aren't part of gossip,
Then they're too soft to name,
So we act hard and laugh instead.

But maybe that was worse than words,
Just letting it all slide.
Maybe he needed to hear me say
I'd also tried to hide.
Instead I vanished in my head
While he looked for me outside,
And found nothing but a door shut.

Because I moved out when I was twenty-two,
I said I needed space.
I tried not to look back,
Couldn't say it to his face.
He needed warmth, I gave him cold.
I ghosted, just in case
My disease would rub off on him.

Yet still he shines, still lights a room
Like nothing's wrong at all,
While I sit still, afraid to speak,
Afraid he'll see me fall.
He jokes with ease, he makes it look
Like life's a carnival,
And I just watch him from the edge.

‘Cuz I remember every pixel
Of the games we used to play.
I remember every silence,
Every word I didn’t say.
And if I ever have a purpose,
Maybe it begins that day
When I finally let him in.

‘Cuz we found escape in video games,
In fantasy and fire.
He saw himself in fighters
Who would climb up from the mire,
While I reached down to turn it off,
Afraid to aim much higher,
He’s kept playing through the storm.

See he’s the one who stayed
When I tried to escape the mess.
He stayed through all the screams and aches,
Held on through all the stress.
I thought myself as Player-1,
But truth is I was less.
He’s the one who took the lead.

Salt of the Earth

Wild bursts spill
In a restless mind,
And from the edges
Of thought, unfolding,
Some to flare
And some to fade,
In patterns of shade
That no daylight has shown.

The hours stretch thin,
Heavy and tight.
They twist when I reach,
And they bend when I flee.
But I'm silent if I breathe;
I don't stay too close.
I just leave before the fight,
Before the flickers of night are gone.

Into the fragile, spinning webs
That this mind has spun,
Sometimes I wonder,
In deeper, should I dive?
Sometimes I wonder,
Have you ever tasted
The salt of the earth,
When the wells have all dried?

It's so sharp and alive,
Bright laughter and sudden light.
These frantic dances;
I'll fade till the noise is gone.
There hasn't been a moment
That feels soft, it's all stone.
Haven't caught a single second
That stays long enough to hold.

Colours that shatter,
Breaking up all the silence.
Running from flame;
I remember you once told me
Lies about freedom,
I can't believe you sold me
The monotony of your world,
That was cold and subdued.

Into the fragile, spinning webs
That this mind has spun,
Sometimes I wonder,
In deeper, should I dive?
Sometimes I wonder,
Have you ever tasted
The salt of the earth,
When the wells have all dried?

When you walked away
From the ever forgiving heat,
Did the cold air you ran
Towards bring you bliss?
You were so obsessed
With chasing your freedom.
In doing so, you fucked around
And lost your place.

Will your passion lose its edge
And grow soft,
And force you back
To that which left you broken?
I wished the liberty you sought
Would leave you hollow,
Now that it has,
I mourn the words I let loose.

Will your steps find empty roads
To wander slow,
And invite forgotten dreams
To stretch their arms?
Oh Dad, how I wish
You'd listen to your heart.
I hope these words
can reach you still.

How could you keep
The cover all to yourself?
How could you set aflame
The life you held?
As we study
The unruly mess you've made.
In time,
Others will walk beside your past,

They'll read stories
Of your restless days with their own,
And learn to never let
Their blaze settle into sparks.
Yeah, time rolls by
Like a beat-up, rusted train
That only carries the pain.
For the smoke from your silence;

Back In The Day

(Written by Adam Pool & Hamza Pool)

Back in the day, not a care in the world,
Just tryna take man's girl.
Back then, it was all diamonds and pearls,
Now it's just L's on L's.
Had the gang around, 24/7,
Now I'm all by myself.
Talked to em everyday
Now they gotta call me from their cell

Back in the day, it was fun & games.
Fuck Henny, we was necking the Wrays.
Feet in the grass, hand on my bae,
Lying down in the shade.
Down at Carni, whining, no sirens,
Just vibes, no violence.
Everyday feeling Fresh & Fit,
But I ain't no Myron.

Back in the day, I was broke but smiling,
Nike on my feet, but the sole kept sliding.
No chains on my neck, no stylin',
Just had dreams and the pain I was hiding.
The mandem believed in fate,
Said "one day, we'll all escape."
Now half the squad on the run
And the other half got time on their plate,

Now everyday I be praying for change
Stuck in the cycle, going insane
Getting drunk, wake up in a daze
Boy, get out of my face
Don't dap me up, cuz I ain't your mate.
You wasn't there when the block got raid.
You wasn't there for the sleepless nights,
So you can't be here for the better days.

Grew up on blocks and lived in estates,
Can you even relate?
When you're surrounded by snakes & vermin,
That's what makes you a python
Yout's get wrapped up like its winter,
Then get dashed out like they're roach
I'm not the type you'd wanna approach,
Used to do OT trips by coach.

Don't give a shit if a OP got his coat.
Come outside, you can still get soaked.
I ain't your average typical bloke.
Used to get T.T. grub by boat.
And pray that the pack gon' land,
And if not, then I hope it floats.
I'll be outside chilling by coast,
With a big fuck-off telescope.

We was out all the time, for like weeks on end.
Now, that's what you call friends.
From the ends, we was raised in the trenches.
Graveyard shifts, man hopped them fences

Ducked them ops with a sword, that's fencing.
Bake off at the 24 Hours.
For a min, now the boss man's venting,
About hoes. I told bro:

"Change your mindset, think about the money,
And how you gon' spend it, rent it.
Leave them hearts just dented, broken."
I'm the Lord of the Rings, like Tolkien
.See the bud that man's been smoking, toking,
Got me feeling awoken.
I'm a man on mission like Naruto,
Cuz I feel like I'm chosen.

Pass me the henny I'm pouring it up
But that shit ain't enough
I grew up with dogs and violence duck sirens
that shits so rough
In the ends it's tough but I'm tougher
Ps get spread like butter
Me and bro we shared that gutter
Swear on your life not mother

Why Can't I Tell My Mother?

Back home,
The dusk was cold and narrow,
The sky hung heavy over me
And pierced me like an arrow;

The wind it whispered from the air
Of things I could not utter,
And in my throat it rose again
The words I'd hide from mother.

Even if I told her so,
She'd smile and turn her face
She thinks that sadness is a habit
And habits fade away.

But I watched her on the stair one night,
Her breath not quite her own;
Her knuckles clenched with quiet fright,
Her gaze like polished stone.

I saw her once beside the bed,
Her shoulders soft with weeping,
She pressed her palm against her head
And thought that I was sleeping.

She whispered names I'd never known,
And begged the night to free her,
But when I stirred, the tears were gone,
She smiled as I drew near her.

Later, I saw her shoulders fold,
Like linen tossed and broken,
Her ringed hand trembled, frail and cold,
And yet no word was spoken.

She wept, I think, in years long gone,
Too young to trust another,
And learned to lock the crying up
In silence, like her mother.

But I could hear her voice betray
The lie her lips repeated,
And know her heart was taught that way
By those who left her beaten.

She tends the world with gentle hands,
She gathers smiles like clovers,
And no one sees the ship she manned
When all her storms blew over.

They think her joy was born that way,
That nothing caused her ache,
While I have seen her soul give way,
I don't try to relate.

She says, “The heart is but a drum,
It beats, it breaks, it heals,”
But mine has grown so strange and numb
Not knowing how to feel.

My father called her mad with scorn,
He’d wield her pain like glass,
Each scar a fault to tally, he’d
Raise her past like ash,

But worse than rage was when he’d grin,
As if her tears were fiction
He’d say, “She’s always been this way,
It’s just her old affliction.”

She’d shrink beneath the weight of years
That he would stretch like leather,
And in his hands, her old despair
Was used to bind us tethered.

I’ve not been cursed with half her grief,
Nor bruised by hands that claimed her.
Yet still I break, and feel defeat
Of shame, so I don’t blame her.

She taught me how to rise and stand
When all the light had faded,
She held me with a weathered hand
Though hers was long unaided.

She made the world seem soft again,
Though it had struck and tried her,
Oh, how I wish she'd not pretend,
Or hide that hurt inside her.

For strength was not what she deserved,
Nor silence in the making.
She should have had a love preserved,
Not one that left her breaking.

Her laughter rings, but I have heard
The whimpers underneath it,
A woman built on every word
That taught her how to sheath it.

She bore the worst, and still she gave
Us all her warmth and cover
And now I grieve, but never brave
Enough to tell my mother.

I want to speak, to bring her near,
To ask if I still matter
But fear she'll echo what I fear
And crack me clean and shatter.

I see her in the footage
Laughing through the screen
And it's so hard to reconcile
The things I know she's seen.

She makes us laugh, she wipes our tears,
Even when her heart is breaking.
Even when the night appears,
And all her fears are waking.

At night I watch the hours slip
Like smoke through fingers torn.
My eyes fill with tears that drip
As I wish to be unborn.

But I don't tell my mother,
Though I need her close each day.
I hold my breath like she once did,
And hope it goes away.

Does It Get Better?

I tossed beneath a worn-out quilt
Before waking up to the cries of
My older self sat close to me,
His shoulders heavy like a weight.

But no words escaped his blubbering mouth,
For in his hands, a tremble shook.
No anger shown, no sight of tears,
Just silent sorrow buried deep inside.

He looked ahead but saw no path,
The air was thick, no space to move.
A pause stretched long beyond the room
That held more questions than replies.

I stayed still and watched the time
Slow down like drips from a tap.
I cared none to ask my future self
About flying cars, and all that shit.

A single thought hung on my lips:
“Does it get better after this?”
I asked this with childish hope.
He turned away to soften the blow,

And said ”No.”

”It shifts, it bends, but never fades,
The anguish doesn’t wear with age.”
The years, he said, would shape the mind
And twist the truths we hold inside.

His glance returned without a word,
No judgment found in what he gave.
He spoke again, voice low and slow,
“I envy what you haven’t lost.”

“I envy how you face the world
Without the scars I carry now,
The hope that waits inside your heart,
Untouched by all that will come.

”The space before the weight appears,
The time before the fall begins.
There’s freedom in not knowing,
You’re already in the **better days**.”

Scattering Stones

I recall the days

When I came down
With nothing left to say,
And they, as ever,
Smiled and cleared the way.

When silence wrapped my chest
And closed my hands,
They stood beside me,
And gently broke the strands.

Light was thin,
And I found them near
The window, looking in.

Have you ever met
Someone so bright and glowing?
Whose light would arrive
Before you even know it?

You should, if you can.

Despite the yonder,
I no longer feared
What passed or what might stay.

There simply was
Their gentle tone, their laughter,
Their words like directionless wind
That moved and left right after.

All the time,
I falter
In the heat of my own my mind.

But like a gift beside me,
Present, they stand.
As their hand presses against my stubble
As coarse as sand.

Some days,
When my thoughts are dim,
And the hours are late and long.

They'll crack a joke, not loud,
And stars are clear,
And I know right there and then
I could stay, and they'd be near.

Have you ever sat
With someone who listens?
Who knows the truth
Behind your false admissions?

You should, if you can.

Eyes soft as feathers,
I'll never forget
Their glance that grazed my sight.

When I came down, giving in,
To my fear of heights,
They stood there still,
Like always, never uptight.

But when I came by
And didn't say a thing,
They knew the weight,
And took it with no strings.

Skies were grey,
And I found me
On the road away from home again.

Looking back.

Ever leaned on someone
You never knew you needed?
And felt an embrace
So warm it defies all reason?

You should, if you can.

In these silent nights,
I can't fight the thoughts
Of shame or what I lack.

When before, there was
Their listening, their laugh,
And in that space,
I found my beating heart.

Fractured...

But their steady presence
Mended every part.