

“Love was” by Michael Lam

Love was
Falling asleep to the soft, wilting hymns of my mother
Love was
Being held with all the might and care in the world
Love was
Singing “I love you” to a dancing purple dinosaur
Love was
Collecting tickets at Chuck E. Cheese for bright, plastic toys to lose the next day
Love was
Mixing every flavor of soda and,
Dunking our meals in pools of ketchup
Love was
Adventuring into new, unseen worlds through a digitized screen
Love was
Running around endlessly on the playground,
Condensing as much “fun” as we could into our games

Love was
Hearing the words “I like like you” and,
Feeling too embarrassed to give a response
Love was
Eating a piping bowl of rice dressed in soy sauce
Love was
Huddling together watching movies till the break of the day
Love was
Replaying “Replay” on repeat to know love was
“Like a melody in my head”
Love was
Performing “Fireflies” to my class on a whim and,
Feeling brave enough to start but too embarrassed to finish
Love was
Browsing movies at Blockbuster to pass the night by myself

Love was
Staying at home alone, comforted by the heat of my computer
Love was
Letting fiction become my reality and my family
Love was

Surviving on fast foods with the money left to me
Love was
Forgetting to tell each other “good morning” and “good night”
Love was
Riding backseat in desolate drives home from school
Love was
Finding another note, another sorry, and another excuse
Love was
Letting silence fill in the gaps between me and everyone else

Love was
Medicating on the sounds of Linkin Park and “numb”
Love was
Finding a new start in a new place with no expectations
Love was
Realizing all I needed was a group of nerds
The smallest iota of purpose to find meaning to wake up
Love was
Cramming through textbook after textbook,
Memorizing answers and solutions endlessly
Love was
Winning medals and scholarships
And thinking anything I ever needed I could earn on merit
Love was
Learning life wasn’t quite as simple and
Discovering pain was part of the process

Love was
Returning back to square one and,
Restarting new again in a new place
Love was
Believing change was possible
Believing change was inevitable
Believing change was here
Love was
Seeing hope for me in the eyes of my mentors
Seeing hope for me in the smiles of my mentees
Seeing hope for me
Love was
Reconnecting and making new friends and family in those around me

Love was
Finding comfort in late-night car conversations on campus
Love was
Studying with friends before finals throughout the night
Hopped on caffeine and adrenaline
Love was
Knowing and believing we could be anything we wanted to be
Love was
Dreaming of our future after we've overcome our struggles and obstacles
Love was
Pressing forward with every day
Working at our goals with commitment
Love was
Soaking up every positive ounce of energy in me
And finding out I was accepted to my dream internship

Love was
Dreading the impending reality, a pandemic
To tear away all the things I smothered my love towards
Love was
Wanting, as days became weeks, weeks became months,
And months wilted everything I came to know of myself
Love was
Waning, as I saw myself become twisted by my isolation
Love was
Remembering this feeling has been with me as long as I can remember
Love was
Crying at how difficult reality had become
Love was
Waking up and living a life that made me feel inadequate
Love was
Longing for something better and reaching out for something
Love was
Seeking a sense of normalcy in phone conversations with those I came to love
and hearing at the end, the words, "you made my day"
and believing part of me was still here

Love was
me