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Jonathan Baumgartner- "Shining through the Darkness"	2
Brylee Ceraul- "Memories"	3
Zoey Gill- "Elder"	4
Ryen Gordon- "Loving You"	5
Anmani Hamiel- "A Different Kind of Love"	6
Steffanie Powell- "A Mother's Love"	7
Sarah Verbeck- "Love's Definition"	8
Alex Clarke- "My Way Back"	9
Erik Davis- "So so far"	10
Fatoumata Diallo- "Ruptured Heart"	11
Martina Jeudy- "Drown"	12
Emily Moody- "Sisters"	13
Jordan Powell- "My First Love"	14
Maia Sigler- "Melancholy Gray"	15
Jairah Tucker- "Unforgettable Love"	16
Nia Williamson- "Different Affection"	17
Maya Joyner- "Chains"	18
Elissa McAdams- "My Love"	19
Shelby Powell- "Silent Music"	20
Rebecca Meze- "Butterfly"	21
Norah Sheldon- "Knife"	22
Ayanna Bravo- "Secret Love"	23
Leea Copelan- "do not thank me for loving you honestly"	24
Kaitlyn Gardner- "Eternity"	25
Zack Jenkins- "Simple"	26
Isabella Monge- "Family"	27
Janiyah Shaw- "Perfect Match"	28
SaiSai Wortham-Green- "I love me"	29
Naiema Camm- "My Pride and Joy"	30
Talijah James- "Untitled"	31
Nastasia Mirabal- "Learn to Fall in Love with Yourself"	32
Grant Russo- "My lovely pupper"	33
Diamond Hicks- "By Your Side"	34
Jadayah Parker- "For the One Who Knows"	35
Kara Ashley- "Self Love at its Finest"	36

“Shining through the Darkness”

Jonathan Baumgartner

Flowers withered,  
Petals on the floor,  
Get well balloons deflated,  
Lights flickering,  
And panic in the hallways.  
The hospital was filled to the max,  
And it seemed like the end of the world,  
But Murray and Edna wouldn't let that gloomy darkness shine brighter than them.  
Their beds pushed together,  
Smiles large and bright,  
They reminisce of times when they were younger.  
With the chaos around them, they could only hear each other's laughter.  
Their hands together,  
Fingers intertwined,  
They slowly faded away.  
Their final words were “I love you.”

“Memories”

Brylee Ceraul

I waited for you,  
but I guess our time never came.  
I can still remember the first time I saw you.  
You had that twinkle in your eye,  
gave me that little smirk.  
Now I'm left with just the memory of it.  
I never realized how hard it was to move on,  
until now that you're gone.  
How was it so easy for you?  
I guess you just weren't the one for me,  
even though I begged you to be.  
I can still hear your voice telling me I was perfect,  
but maybe I just wasn't your perfect.  
Did she have what I didn't?  
Or maybe it was just the thought of someone new.  
I never knew you could love someone like you loved me,  
but now it's clear to see.  
I was never the one for you.

“Elder”

Zoey Gill

The time is now  
I've waited to hear  
Run out because I hate it here  
Emotions came at me at full force  
They made fun of me, of course  
What do I expect?  
The same person who claims I'm ungrateful for standing up for myself  
Is the same one who will tear me down for expressing my mental health  
But that's okay  
I made it here  
The month of love and history  
Run away from misery  
Find passion in curiosity  
Should I rebel and kiss the devil?  
Their lips are calling my name  
Lose myself in money and fame  
If I sell myself, then who's to blame?  
Let my lust get the best of me  
My true intentions are hard to find  
My heart is flooded by consequences  
But I don't trust my own mind  
I want to call out for my mother  
But I'll make excuses for my pride  
I refuse to confess my actions  
I'd rather choke and die

“Loving You”  
Ryen Gordon

I love you  
I love you  
I love you  
I still write my name with your last as mine  
As if I am a child in grade school  
Images of you float around my brain making their way to my temporal lobe  
You're on my mind 24/7, 365  
My enemies are yours and yours are mine  
My eyes expand just looking at you  
Seeing you causes a storm of butterflies  
A storm that is uncontrollable  
A storm with no mercy  
A love like ours is rare  
Knowing someone for so long and never getting tired of them  
Seeing each other everyday and still being excited as if it's the first  
I love you and only you

“A Different Kind of Love”

Amani Hamiel

Our relationship is unreal,  
feels sent from above,  
impossible to bear to some,  
loving to us,  
incomparable to even the most loved love of them all.  
Our ears listen,  
hearts beat simultaneously,  
eyes locked into one another.  
languages do not match,  
but our understanding is impeccable.  
I love my four legged protector.  
He loves this two legged pal.  
A dog is truly a girl's best friend.

"A Mother's Love"

Steffanie Powell

There is nothing better than a mother's hug  
A warm embrace that feels like home  
Where nothing else matters  
Where all senses are flooded with the feeling of love  
Kind eyes meet her child's eyes  
She wipes away all the tears that stained her child's face  
Soon the tears stop falling  
And the child's breathing evens out  
Everything becomes okay again

“Love’s Definition”

Sarah Verbeck

Love.

So simple, yet so easily misconstrued.

A natural passion in unnatural expectations.

Love is everything.

It’s late night talks,

lunch in a Kroger lot,

a large drink to share,

dances in the kitchen,

thrift shopping,

singing your favorite songs,

riding with the windows down.

You ask what is love,

rather than what is it not?

“My Way Back”

Alex Clarke

I deviated away from a spot of happiness that I once resided  
Now I see myself looking back trying to find it  
I became lost in my ways  
I take a step backwards every day  
I looked deeply at a picture from when I was a little boy and I envied my smile  
Because I realized I haven't smiled like that in a long while  
I became too dependent on what people thought of me  
Painting pictures of who I ought to be  
Love within myself is what I figured I was missing  
No longer listening to people that wouldn't listen  
Now I see the love from me is all I need  
Now I see the love from me is how I get back up on my feet  
Learn to love yourself  
So you no longer will need it from someone else

“So so far”

Erik Davis

When we first saw met each other,  
I was from a different state  
You were from a different country.  
Yet our friendship became strong.  
The times we saw each other face to face was short,  
Yet those precious moments are some of my favorites.  
Although we leave a sea apart,  
I still feel your love.  
You're the closest friend I have ever had.  
I think of you daily  
And I dream about the day  
That we get to see each other face to face again.  
The day we can reunite as friends.  
Although I haven't seen your face in years.  
I still feel your kindness.  
Although it has been years since we sat down and ate lunch together,  
I know that you still care.  
Although I have not heard your voice in years  
I still know that our friendship is strong.

“Ruptured heart.”

Fatoumata Diallo

We fell in love with each other's sound.  
The way our heartbeat sounded when we were close.  
How you lowered your voice when talking to me.  
I loved you.  
You were my calm after the storm.  
And you reminded me how I was your roots that held you down.  
We were everything to one another.  
You loved me.  
At least until you found another.  
Someone else who you shared your sound with.  
Until someone else took my position as your roots.  
How could you just leave me?  
Like what we shared wasn't special.  
What did I do to deserve this?  
I begged you to come back but you ignored my calls.  
So now I sit and wonder why am I here?  
Why am I alive?  
You were my life,  
My one purpose to live.  
You were my heart  
but now I'm empty and bitter.  
Hating when I see others in love.  
You have destroyed me.  
What I once found special is something I despise now.  
Although these feelings of hatred is strong,  
Sometimes I still find myself wishing you would come back to me  
because nothing will beat the sound of your heartbeat when I was around,  
and how you talked to me in the gentlest voice.  
I loved you  
And I know you loved me.

“Drown”

Martina Jeudy

The aspect of self love  
Is such a foreign thought  
Loving yourself unconditionally  
Because if you don't  
No one else's will matter  
It's the starting point  
For good relations  
Good health  
Sane mind  
The first step  
To the stairs that will guide you  
To the ultimate  
“I love me”  
Because it is all you have  
When the world swirls out of control  
Gaze into yourself and wish  
For the enamored feeling to seep out  
And drown you in it  
In hopes that your soul will eventually soak it in

“Sisters”

Emily Moody

Nothing can compare to the love of two sisters.

No matter how often they fight,

The love will remain,

And they will bounce back.

They're friends

But they didn't choose one another

They were stuck with each other

And they wouldn't have it any other way

“My First Love”

Jordan Powell

I just wish the love was real.  
Where'd it all go?  
Those late night dinner dates.  
Those midnight movies.  
The happiest times of my life.  
That smile that was on your face.  
That look I used to put in your eyes.  
Loving you was my only mission.  
Making you happy was the only thing on my mind.  
My love for you will never go missing.  
It just won't ever matter.

“Melancholy Grey”

Maia Sigler

You barged into my heart all at once not even bothering to wipe your feet at the door

I still see traces of your shoeprints in the corridor.

I still feel your heartbeat when I run my fingers through.

I should've stopped you

I should have pushed the breaks but you brought up so many new things for me

You unboxed feelings I kept hidden in the corner of the attic.

Your smile brought luminescence through the windows

I would gaze out of them everyday, shaking off the looming shadow of darkness more and more until it was gone.

I guess I shook you as well because after the darkness left, you left too and you took your light with you.

Now I have nothing, nothing but a big empty heart and no one to share it with.

A big empty heart that once pumped rivers of vibrant red blood, but now flows rivers of melancholy grey.

“Unforgettable Love”

Jairah Tucker

My love for you runs as deep as the ocean  
No matter what happens or how far we go I will always love you  
I never thought that I would fall so hard  
Till the day I met you  
I don't wanna go a day without seeing your face  
Just to see you smile and laugh with you makes me happy  
You've changed my whole life  
you've made me a better person  
You've picked me up whenever I have fallen  
You've made me strong when I was weak  
My love for you is unforgettable  
My love for you is everlasting  
No one could ever make me love as hard as you do  
Being with you, close to you  
Brightens up my whole world  
You make me happy on a cloudy day  
Every moment with you has been like a ray of sunshine  
Without you, my love would be incomplete  
Throughout all the things we have been through I still love you  
I still care, you are my whole heart  
You are my first true love  
An unforgettable love you are

“Different Affection”

Nia Williamson

A couple both with different pigmentation of their skin  
A fine restaurant they chose with glass tables and fancy seats with flower bouquets covering the  
back  
They chose the finest restaurant that will define how true their love is  
The music was played by violins that matched the perfect pitch to their voices  
The tension rose as the night got any longer  
His hand reached over across the table lifting her hand then locking them together  
There was a heartbeat in between each other's hand  
Love that you feel surpassing through each others body  
A connection that felt like a lifetime but in reality just a few years  
Love that is so tight it feels stuck like a dog and its owner  
Once you have that bond with that is unbreakable the love is unconditionally strong

“Chains”

Maya Joyner

I love you like no other,  
Care for you more than myself  
But we must break these chains of control.  
You show me love in poison  
Care for me like a burden  
Spew toxins like they're affirmations  
And yet I still love you like no other  
But I must break these chains of hatred.  
Claims of love roll off your tongue effortlessly,  
While tears flood my eyes.  
The sweet nothings are nothing more than a lie  
And we both know,  
These chains are bound to break

“My Love”

Elissa McAdams

My love is handheld,  
Placed perfectly in a pocket on a rainy day.  
Waiting for the sunshine,  
The warmth of hands once more.  
My love is endless,  
A bottomless pit that we cannot see the end of.  
A match dropped is no match for this cavern,  
Just fall in.  
My love is gentle,  
Soft and desirable, yet unforgiving.  
A silkworm’s spindle could not rival my heart,  
I dare you, fall in.  
My love is harsh,  
Brash and abrasive at times.  
I am not too much,  
You don’t love me enough.  
My love is for you,  
Wrapped up in a nice neat bow.  
I do not ask for your’s in return,  
It will be welcomed.

“Silent Music”  
Shelby Powell

You play the silent music when she's around,  
She's the type of girl who thinks every song is about her.  
Every line a declaration of love,  
Each verse a confession,  
Every note a promise she knows you cannot keep.  
But that doesn't matter,  
Even in a world absent of all sound,  
She would care.  
So as the silent music plays,  
She will continue to love you.  
Never uttering a single word,  
Despite longing to speak...  
If only just once.

“Butterfly”

Rebecca Meze

When I die I want my body to be dropped into the sea  
So my life will have finally helped someone  
Or something  
I wanna change my unwanted face to something new  
Something prettier than what I was given  
Something I can be happy with  
I want the bits and pieces that I hate to just  
Fall off  
And be replaced with the images in my head  
And on TV  
And Instagram  
I want to be covered in the prettiest scars you've ever seen  
That will soon heal and reveal a beautiful butterfly  
Because I am trapped in this ugly cocoon that people tell me to love  
But I'd rather it burn  
Because self love is a lot harder than tweaking what's wrong  
And making it seem better  
But it never gets better  
Because the problem wasn't the cocoon  
It was the butterfly...

“Knife”

Norah Sheldon

I came in your life  
Showed you love  
While you pulled a knife  
You plunged it in my back  
Paralyzed.  
Is this what love is?  
Under attack?  
I never thought love would hurt this much  
Torn between love and hate  
Until this date.  
I never stood my ground.  
While you hunted me down like a hound  
Running through the woods trying to get away  
You never stopped coming my way.  
Maybe that's why I always circled back every time.  
Was it a crime?

“Secret Love”  
Ayanna Bravo

As soon as I wake up  
My head is filled with you  
I wish you knew  
The way I felt  
About you  
Everytime I look at you  
My heart starts to melt  
You have no idea  
No clue  
Just how much I love you.

“do not thank me for loving you honestly”  
leea copeland

it is hard to not love you  
when your body is a synonym of softness  
when you drown me in your love  
yet manage to set me aflame with each kiss  
when your words hold so much weight  
that i feel as if i am sinking whenever you speak.  
i remember that one day in november  
when we held hands for the first time  
sweaty palms folding over boyish fingers  
i made a promise to love you back then,  
just to make sure that you knew  
that i would be here for you now, even on your worst nights  
because the moon still rises when the sun takes her time.  
so please, do not thank me for loving you honestly,  
this is the true tenderness you have always deserved.

“Eternity”

Kaitlyn Gardner

I somehow find all the luminous colors in this plain gray room  
I hear lovely mellifluous sounds in the silence of her presence  
She brings me everything, even while we do nothing  
People walk past  
Completely unknowing of our tie to one another  
Blind to our blissful bond  
What anyone else is aware of is insignificant  
For you,  
I'm willing to wait for eternity

“Simple”

Zack Jenkins

The days we share together are as few and far between as the coming of snow  
But, even then, I treasure your presence like that of finding a grain of alexandrite within black sand

And, in the midst of winter's silence, we both know

That while our threads are thin, we'll each still hold the last remaining pieces in the palm of a pale, withering hand

“Family”

Isabella Monge

I'm here

Here for the Sunday breakfast

Here for the beach days

Here for the cookouts

The unconditional love

Family can be the best thing or the worst thing

But no matter what

You'll always love them

I'm here

Here for the neighborhood walks

Here for the movie nights

Here for the road trips

The memories that shape me into who I am

The words that will stick with me forever

I'm here

Here for the fun times

Here for the sad times

Here for the type of love you won't find anywhere else

I'm here for my family

“Perfect Match”

Janiyah Shaw

A best friend bond is something like no other  
Better than a sister, mother, or brother  
It can lead to something better or stay how it is  
But in the end, that love will never fizz  
He, she, they, it, however they identify  
You love them for them, that's something you can't buy  
You're able to understand them when no one else can  
In a type of way, you're their biggest fan  
Best friend love is precious like a gem  
So after you read this, tell your best friend you love them

"I love me"

SaiSai Wortham-Green

Healing from a broken heart taught me  
i need to love myself before i love anyone else  
So i learned to be selfish with my love  
People say being selfish is a bad thing  
But im selfish about me, my time, and the love i give out  
I love myself with no regret even tough it took years to  
i love and embrace all of my flaws with a smile  
I had broken wings but i learned to love them and became a beautiful butterfly  
Im in love with myself and no one can take that away from me.  
*-love yourself*

“My Pride and Joy”

Naiema Camm

Love is everywhere  
It could even be in the clothes you wear  
My love is in my pets  
My cats are my kids  
I raised them since you could see their ribs  
I feed them by hand  
Not everything went according to plan  
They are my babies  
Even though neither of them were ladies  
They are boys  
We even got them toys  
We had beds  
They were so tiny you could put a scrunchie around their head  
We took naps together  
We could sleep forever  
When everything was perfect  
Someone came along and rekt it  
The people in the office gave us a fine  
So we had to say goodbye  
I gave one to my grandma  
I gave the other to my friend down the street  
I can still see them whenever I want  
But it is not the same from when they were home  
When I get a job and get the money  
Someday I will get them back to where they belong  
Home with me and running free

“Untitled”

Talijah James

A true friend is someone you can count on in the darkest moments.

To be there for you and to strengthen your spirits

And to remind you of the elegance that is all around you

A true friend of is patient and one of a kind

A true friend will often make you laugh.

A true friend is always going to tell you the truth

Friends are always going to protect each other

They always trust each other

They are always persevering

True friends don't envy, because they are like a gift from heaven.

“Learn To Fall In Love With Yourself.”

Nastasia Mirabal

I grew up thinking I was never going to be good enough.

My thighs were too big, my stomach isn't flat, and I've never been the athletic type.

I thought that my image defined me, and if we're being honest some of those feelings never went away.

Sometimes I'd stare in the mirror for hours thinking about all the things about me I had to “fix”.

Part of that is because of how I grew up.

Girls were supposed to be curvy but only in the right places, don't eat a second plate, those calories will catch up to you. Unlimited access to the internet and seeing all the girls who were deemed “perfect”... and I looked like none of them.

I realized I was too young to be worrying about those aspects of my life.

Then we got to middle school, surrounded by all the pretty, skinny, straight haired white girls and I wanted, more than anything in the world, to look like them, and eventually I lost myself.

There wasn't a day that went by that I woke up and like the way I looked, for years I could say I hated myself because I didn't look like everyone else.

One day, there was a girl I saw who looked like me, and I loved her.

I went from wanting to be like every girl at my school to wanting to be her.

I then realized that I can't be everyone else. No matter how bad I wanted to be someone different I had to learn to be me, whoever that maybe.

It took so long to find me, my interests, my humor, my style, my friends. All of it was apart of a process.

Then one day I woke up, and I thought I was beautiful. I still had my flaws, but my appearance, and my personality just fit me.. finally.

“My lovely pupper”

Grant Russo

We have come very far  
From the beginning of 2014  
To now in 2021  
See for years I have wondered what would I do when your gone  
For many people losing a dog is sad  
This will include me too  
Your not gone your still here  
But what will I do  
When you are  
You are my reason for staying happy through the last year  
The reason I still do what I do and keep pushing on  
You make me feel safe  
And make me happy  
You keep me warm when I am cold  
See my Little Pupper  
You are my pride and enjoy  
Like a dad to a child  
You are mine  
I love you my child  
With all I am  
I will keep you safe  
Till it's your time  
I love you good boy  
You will understand  
That I will keep you safe till the end

“By Your Side”  
Diamond Hicks

I've stood there for years,  
watching you change and grow.  
I've lived many days with you.  
Days where the sun envied your smile  
and where the rain echoed your cries.  
Yet, I stayed here with you.  
Watched as your interests evolved,  
the hobbies you picked up and dropped like hot coals.  
I encouraged the relationships you built  
and cried over the ones you destroyed.

You changed over these years.  
Some of them you hated,  
others you liked.  
But we both knew these changes were necessary,  
and you built yourself around those changes.  
Improving yourself further,  
growing up and preparing for the future.  
Even behind the glass mirror,  
I couldn't be more proud of you

“For the One Who Knows”  
Jadayah Parker

When you told me,  
I wanted to grab your hand  
To dance with you.  
I wanted to look you  
Dead in the eyes  
And tell you I love you.  
When you told me,  
I wanted that moment to last forever  
I immediately dreamt of my future with you  
How I would just talk with you and your mother about nothing,  
And we would laugh in her living room  
That once belonged to you too.  
When you told me,  
I wanted to pick you up and  
Run around the world.  
Thousands of marathons in one  
To celebrate what could be.  
When you told me,  
I was in my room talking to you  
And forgetting about how  
My heart and mind runs faster than my feet do.  
Oh how that window of opportunity opened  
And the winds came pouring through to my soul.  
When you told me,  
I wished I was yours and sometimes I still do.

“Self love at its finest’

Kara Ashley

I did it  
I broke the barrier  
I finally learned how to love me  
Nobody can take it from me  
I refuse to be drained of my self love again  
I will be the strongest being I know  
I will shine like the beautiful star I am,  
Above everyone else  
I’ve rid myself of all negativity  
All rumors about me shall remain,  
I know who I am and what I do  
They don’t have a clue who I am  
It shall remain that way,  
At least until they mature and find love for themselves  
And not look for it in others  
It’s a waste of precious time that we need to heal ourselves  
Healing is important  
All the things we’ve gone through at a young age  
It’s hard to love ourselves  
But I’ve found the key  
I have achieved what others struggle to get so much as a taste of  
I love myself more than any being other than God  
My love for myself can no longer be removed  
It is stuck to my heart and mind  
Anyone who tried to remove it shall be removed from my life  
I have no time to deal with haters  
Nor do I have the time to deal with disrespect  
No matter who it’s from, I will not tolerate it  
I love God  
I love me  
I love my boyfriend  
And, I love me  
I love my boyfriend  
And, I love me