

1993

## Certainty

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### Recommended Citation

Rooney, Caitlin (1993) "Certainty," *Calliope (1954-2001)*: Vol. 1993 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol1993/iss1/5>

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# *Certainty*

*by Caitlin Rooney*

He quoted the Bible to me. To me, an atheist who fainted in mass. Something about love and being faithful. I was only seventeen, and he wanted forever. I wanted to give it to him from our first awkward kiss, but my heart and my brain got into a huge argument about it all and left me breaking his heart. But first we fell in love.

It happened in an instant in the woods. We'd been talking about nothing for hours when I lied, "If I didn't know better, I'd say I love you." I didn't mean it, but, for what it's worth, I wanted to. Then he changed the course of history. "Will you marry me?" Yeah, right. I was sitting in the woods with a virtual stranger who had just asked me to marry him. "Sure," I joked, and then we kissed for the second time.

I once saw a movie where the narrator commented on the ten greatest kisses of all time as the hero and heroine embraced in number I-don't-remember-what. Well, this kiss must have been somewhere on that short list, because by the time it was over, I, who had never so much as played house, wanted nothing else but to be his bride, barefoot there in the woods.

We wandered back to reality a few minutes later. Back into my grandparents' backyard, back to their fiftieth anniversary party, and back to the disapproving stare of many a relative. "What's that Amy up to now?" all their eyebrows silently mused. They all knew that, despite my good mother's valiant efforts, I was not a model child. I'd had my fair share of boyfriends and had accordingly been the butt of a whole mess of locker room rumors, some of them true.

The fact of the matter was I liked attention, and somewhere between my mother's telling me that babies came when God blessed

a married couple who loved each other and Him very much and the first time Bobby McCullough felt me up in the school parking lot in seventh grade, I figured out how to get some. But that's not what it was about with Michael.

He was an innocent. That I knew when he first tried to sneak a kiss and bumped my sunglasses clear off my face. That was when we first met, the night before the party at my grandparents' house. He and my cousin Chuck were good friends, and he came along with Chuck to meet my train.

Chuck decided we should all go bowling, so we rented red and blue shoes the whole town had worn before us and bowled. More precisely, Chuck bowled while Michael and I had a gutterball contest. I won, and as Chuck turned his back on us to bowl his last frame, Michael leaned over and kissed me. It was stupid of me to be wearing sunglasses indoors anyway. Then Chuck turned around, we returned our shoes, and I treated the guys to softies at the local Dairy Queen. Not once did I even think of seducing him.

Two days later I was back on the train, heading home with all the family gossip for Mom and a bag of leftovers Grandma had insisted I take home to "your folks." "It's a pity they couldn't make it, but it was nice to get a chance to see you at least. I just hope you weren't too bored out here with us," she said at the station. "Of course not, Gram," I smiled.

I got on the train and cried. As soon as I left I knew it was over. How could poor, sweet Michael stand a chance against the Bobby McCulloughs of the world? Bible or no, he couldn't. I listened to a Walkman full of love songs, knowing I was only seventeen, and that my mind was right to keep asking, "What about your dreams? What about your future?" I was too smart for love, plus, I had to go home. There, nobody bowled and there weren't any woods for miles.

That was before we bought the house, of course. And before I learned to trust a kiss.