



1999

Chris's Knees

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Recommended Citation

Kosick, Becky (1999) "Chris's Knees," *Calliope*: Vol. 1999 : Iss. 1 , Article 14.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol1999/iss1/14>

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Chris's Knees

Bare feet make me smile.
I said yours were the ugliest I'd ever seen.
And they really were.
But that didn't bother you.
Your knees brought your only self-consciousness.
There's a picture of us,
our heads together,
but your body engaged in an awkward struggle
to keep your knees from showing.
They still do.
You fell skateboarding once,
now they don't grow any hair.
You can't tell from the picture though.

The last time I saw you,
I spent the day sitting on your dock,
keeping your five-year-old blond cousin, Jake
from throwing the wrench you were using
into the lake.
You were smoking and he kept saying
"Grandpa, I didn't know Chris smoked."
Your grandpa spanked him
and sent him up the bank.
"Go sit with Grandma."
He never did, though.
He walked to the end of the dock and jumped in the lake.
That's Muskegon Lake.
Only rich people
live on it

and they all have jetskis, boats, use fertilizer on their lawns.
It sits on the surface.
That's what your cousin jumped in.
I was afraid when you finally threw your cigarette
in the water, that the whole thing might ignite.
It didn't, though,
and I was glad
not to have to go to the hospital
while you were still wearing shorts that showed your knees.

Becky Kosick